Nocturnal Phenomena:
an investigation in print and installation

by

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of a Doctor of Philosophy

University of Tasmania

January 2011

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PhD submission in February, 2011

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Abstract

This project is concerned with exploring phenomena of the night through combining printmaking and installation practices. I explore a phenomenology of darkness via embodied vision. The embodied nature of vision implies subjective experience and this is the key to re-activating a viewer's relationship to the environment in darkness. I consider how perception changes in the dark and the intermingling of the senses becomes more apparent, precipitating a heightened suggestivity to nocturnal phenomena. I have drawn on phenomenological ideas and methods and on my own nocturnal experiences to reflect on aspects of the changing contemporary night, creating a series of print-based installations that extend the possibilities for sensory affect. I bring together installation strategies and the analogue print as an embodiment of the tactile to assert the phenomenological.

The submitted work has developed through extensive experimentation that draws together diverse methods for combining prints in installation environments. I have explored strategies that locate the visual via embodied processes, combining the physical mark making possibilities of the analogue print with installation strategies. Using print processes I have collected a range of marks derived from tactile interactions with forms. The printed marks do not describe visual forms, rather they are fragments that signify a sensate engagement with the unseen in the dark. The ability of print to reproduce images in different states has facilitated possibilities for the construction and fragmentation of imagery, as repeated forms alter and echo, generating heightened effects. I configure these in ways that strategically focus on the tactile, inviting an intimate and experiential engagement. The intent of the project is to create a perceptual intervention, a break in habitual and everyday modes of viewing.

In terms of theory, Merleau Ponty's discussions of phenomenological thought provide key reference points for the project, in particular the idea that experience at the moment of apprehension and prior to conceptual meaning suggests new ways of understanding the relationship between self and the world, one that relocates vision in the body. I have also drawn on the writings of Jonathan Crary, who describes how an understanding of embodied vision has emerged and discusses ways that contemporary perceptual experiences are changing, and Paul Crowther, who considers the phenomenological possibilities for artworks. Rosalind Krauss' critique of the optical has also been significant as it locates several art practices that subvert the disembodied optical; and I trace a series of connections with other artists who have enlisted the bodily as a means of destabilising the visual.

The project is located within a field of contemporary artists who engage with ideas about perception and darkness in relation to the environment and, in particular, with artworks that deal with the concept of an embodied relationship to darkness and utilise phenomenal strategies to engage viewers on a sensory level. Rothko, Turrell, Morris, Eliasson and Kusama deal with perceptual questions, creating immersive environments that engage in

reflection on the world. Fernandez, Hofshi, Bitters, Seigel, Silveira and Pien deal with perceptions of darkness in their works and develop strategies to extend the sensory. While current installation practices often explore the sensory possibilities of the digital, my installation positions the analogue print to comment on the transition from the physical to the virtual worlds that we increasingly inhabit.

The results of this project are shown in a dark, labyrinthine installation that interrogates the realm of perception, as the viewer is invited to consider the embodied nature of vision. Everyday modes of seeing are destabilised through encounters with fragments of imagery that hover between form and feeling, imagination and reality. This is suggestive of experiences of the night, where not only tactile, aural and visual phenomena are experienced differently but also images are conjured in the mind in response to nocturnal events. This exploration of ideas and processes suggests a reading of the night which points to the richness of sensuous engagement with the world, encouraging the viewer to reconsider their own multi-sensory relationship to the world in darkness.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: A Phenomenology of Darkness

The roots of my preoccupation with the darkness of night can be traced back to my childhood when I felt an overwhelming fear of the dark. I remember the feeling of dread, certain that something would reach out from under my bed or the stairs to grab my legs. I imagined eyes looking in the windows at night before the curtains were closed. I knew by heart the shadows cast by the house lights in my darkened bedroom. And I would lie in bed awake listening to rustling sounds not sure if there was someone in the room – I remember the moment that I realised the breathing sounds were actually my own, amplified by the sheets pulled up around my neck!

On my own in bed I wrestled with night terrors. Night was an internal time when I grappled with imagined fears, grotesque distortions of daytime difficulties. I had a tendency to be solitary and anxious, associated with an underlying insecurity, and darkness amplified these feelings. In the dark I was aware of being alone in the world and of encountering the darkness on my own. My early relationship with darkness was linked to this existential angst but was also rich and multi-faceted. It was a kind of subterranean stream of consciousness that never found expression in the light of day. It was a whole inner aspect of myself that was hidden from the world and from others.

Although the darkness felt sinister, this was not linked to any particular trauma and I actually liked the quiet and underground nature of this engagement with the dark. I also felt a rush of excitement in encounters with the unknown darkness as fight or flight responses were triggered; I remember vividly the feeling that prompted me to leap up the bottom dark section of stairs. This search for a more fully felt sense of myself in the dark worked to counteract the sense of obliteration that darkness brought. It was a way to make my presence seem more real. As a small child my sense of being was tenuous and easily disrupted. The threat of psychological annihilation was made

manifest in darkness. Creating ways to assert my presence and to feel my living body were my defences against this.

My childhood home overlooked the Derwent River and the city and we had a wide and scenic kitchen window without curtains. At night the kitchen light and family activities kept the awful aspects of the night at bay. I remember looking alternately at the reflections of the kitchen in the window and then looking through these out at the city lights across the water and searching for the lights of boats and planes. I looked for the moon and falling stars and satellites from this window. I remember a kind of awe at the vastness of the sky, which as children we linked with the idea of infinity. I remember imagining infinity, which felt so vast that I felt infinitely insignificant.

As I teenager I explored the dark in different ways, playing games with others that as I got older took on more adult meanings. Darkness was the zone of experimentation – like Henson's teenagers, experimentation with new behaviours felt both more exciting and more approachable in darkness. As a teenager I began walking at night. I still walk at night and this forms the basis for the project - it is the time when I am released from the pressures of the day and I wander in darkness, allowing nocturnal impressions to wash over me and I reconnect with more internal aspects of myself through engagement with the dark. During this project I explored the night in the area immediately surrounding my house, both the bush and the urban streets, at times revisiting the impulse for fight or flight.

While this project has roots in my childhood, it is not concerned with unravelling my personal psychology. My aim is to explore a phenomenology of darkness, as my experiences have much in common with others' experiences of the dark. The fragments of memories from my childhood, as outlined, exhibit many of the salient features characteristic of impressions of the night, although people's experiences vary. Darkness has the divergent effects of on the one hand reducing what can be seen but on the other of expanding visual sensitivity as the pupil dilates and adjusts to low light conditions. As darkness reduces vision the inner world comes to dominate our

experience. The experience of darkness is then a solitary one in which consciousness of self prevails. Uncertainty about the external world generates a sense of anxiety about the unseen. Darkness can be enveloping and have an active physical and imaginative presence. Vision in the dark is embodied, incorporating the multi-sensory. Sounds and shapes are amplified and seem strange and threatening, provoking internal uncertainty. Space is experienced differently. This heightened sensitivity to both external and internal phenomena can precipitate new and lucid awareness of perception, being and consciousness. These experiences characterise a phenomenology of darkness and they inform my experimentation in phenomenological effects.

As an artist I have developed an interest in rendering the experiential. In my previous body of work I experimented with phenomenal effects, dealing with bodily relationship to the environment, and specifically exploring immersion in water. I developed ways to render the experience of plunging into icy mountain streams in large-scale prints that addressed the sensory. This project again uses the experiential as the basis for work but extends this further by exploring a greater range of effects and by using installation strategies.

Broader Concerns and Aims

This project is driven by my personal experiences and interest in the perception of darkness and draws on these to engage with broader concerns. Primarily, my project addresses questions concerning the representation of perceptual experiences of darkness. Perception cannot be reduced to the visual sense alone as we draw on a range of sense faculties, some of which, Merleau-Ponty suggests, are unconscious. He describes a pre-conscious level of existence, which he calls 'wild being', which lies beyond the conscious, submerged in the darkness of bodily functioning. Although sight is the primary sense and we rely on it heavily to perceive the world, the concept of embodied vision, which incorporates multiple sensory inputs, describes a more fully fleshed out understanding of the active perceptive process. Embodied visuality is informed by all sensory modalities and relocates vision

in the body. It is a synaesthetic experience, influenced by more than just the light that hits the retina. The richness of this fully embodied process gives subjective depth and dimension to our experiences. In the dark the multi-sensory aspect of our perceptions is more apparent. This project aims to convey a sense of embodied vision in the dark using print based media and installation strategies.

Darkness is associated with the idea of existential questioning and has often been deployed as a metaphor for anxiety, alienation and uncertainty. The anxieties of a particular time are often reflected in representations of the night. An underlying uncertainty of our time is that of our long-term survival given the damage we have inflicted on the environment, and this awareness is part of everyday consciousness. However, we are less conscious of our damaged relationship with the world in darkness. Murray Melbin suggests that the night is now the new frontier that we are colonising, as human activity is expanding in time rather than space.[1] It is another ecological niche that we are invading. The night ether is full of invisible radio wave activity and the night sky is flooded by light pollution. There are documented effects of too much light on disruptions to animal behaviour and on the human body – our sleep, health and hormones move out of balance.[2] This project aims to draw attention to the changing human sensorium at night. Our perceptual relationship to the environment in darkness is becoming more tenuous as we increasingly inhabit the urban and virtual worlds.

The final body of work brings together installation strategies and the analogue print as an embodiment of the tactile to assert the phenomenological. The embodied nature of vision implies subjective experience and this is the key to re-activating a viewer's relationship to the environment in darkness. I explore

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[1] Murray Melbin, Night as Frontier: Colonising the World after Dark (New York: The Free Press, 1987) 49.
[2] Verlyn Klinkenborg, "Our Vanishing Night," National Geographic.November (2008): 109.

multi-sensory installation strategies that attempt to counter the dominant and less embodied modes of visuality of the contemporary nocturnal sensorium.[3] The aim of the work is to disrupt the everyday visual and virtual with the haptic, and to posit perceptual questions that engage embodied experience. This project activates the print to operate in installation as a form of perceptual intervention, a break in habitual modes of viewing. I embed an underlying current of concern about our relationship to the environment, which is particularly evident at the urban edge and manifests in different ways in darkness. The work foregrounds the sensory, encouraging the viewer to value embodied and subjective experience. An empathic imaginative response to artwork can potentially promote a shift in ways of being. This encapsulates the intent of my own project, which is to create what I term a perceptual intervention in everyday modes of being.

Research Questions

The first question, which establishes a context for the project is; how can I link the experience of the night environment with ideas about the contemporary sensorium? The sensory experience of the night is now different to how it was prior to electrical lighting, and for pre-historic man the nocturnal sensorium was completely different, holding absolute terror as predators literally threatened existence. When walking in the bush at night with a mobile phone, a torch and a camera I dealt with anxiety and the unfamiliar, but not terror. Contemporary nocturnal experience is influenced now by our access to technology. These technologies tend to render experience in virtual form. In chapter one I establish the difference between embodied and disembodied modes of vision as this provides a rationale to conceptualise the project,

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[3] Caroline Jones describes the sensorium as "the subject's way of coordinating all of the body's perceptual and proprioceptive signals as well as the changing envelope of the self. The sensorium is at any historical moment shifting, contingent, dynamic and *alive.* It lives only in us and through us, enhanced by our technologies and extended prosthetically but always subject to our consciousness..."
Caroline Jones, Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology and Contemporary Art (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2006) 8.

creating linkages between ideas about the nocturnal sensorium and embodied visuality. I discuss Martin Jay who critiqued ocular-centrism in twentieth century Europe and Merleau-Ponty as another significant writer on embodiment. Jonathon Crary's analysis of modes of vision provides insight into how ways of seeing have changed, reflecting the changing sensorium, and his writing also informs my project.

A second question that I consider is; in what ways does phenomenological thinking apply in the making and in the reception of art? Since the 1950s Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology has influenced both artists, who drew on his ideas in creating work, and writers, who have used it as a tool for analysis of artworks. In chapter two, I outline how Merleau-Ponty applies phenomenology to develop the idea that a painter bodily enacts perception. Paul Crowther has extended this idea by conceiving of the notion 'phenomenal depth', which includes a much wider range of ways that art can convey the phenomenal, beyond the brush strokes of a painter. I am interested in how I can embed the phenomenal in work from the perspective of an artist. Robert Morris' work and writing, particularly on dealing with the experience of space, helps to establish a language with which to think about making work in three dimensions. These readings provided a backdrop of ideas about how I might set up artworks that focussed on phenomenal effects.

On a practical level, I address a third question; how can I convey nocturnal experience in multi-sensory form? As my interest was not in descriptive imagery but on conveying the experiential, I sought methods of mark making that drew on the tactile. I found that this strategy for subverting the optical could be located in artworks through the twentieth century. Rosalind Krauss' discussion of artworks that enlist the sensory to destabilise the optical complements the practical work I had done. Artists who use this strategy form a central part of the field in which I situate my work. The section in chapter two which outlines the field explores how current installation work often uses digital technology, and frequently seeks to address the sensory using strategies of immersion and sensation. In contrast, the analogue print points to the physical world from which we are becoming dislocated. I explore

embodied visuality both via the analogue print in combination with installation strategies.

A fourth question that emerged during the project was; how can the print strategically contribute to the recuperation of embodied knowledge? The project considered the potential of the analogue print and how it could be deployed meaningfully in the field of contemporary practice given our increasing inhabitation of virtual worlds. I address this via a discussion on the field in chapter two and in my work I position print to ask the viewer to reconsider the embodied aspects of vision.

The fifth question, addressed in this project was: how can I create work that prompts a viewer to revalue embodied vision as a strategy to heighten their sensitivity and re-activate their relationship to the nocturnal environment? Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology provided a starting point for practical investigations. The early phase of the project involved an examination of my own phenomenal experiences of the dark. Phenomenological enquiry begins with an examination of perceptual experiences as the basis for dealing with more theoretical questions. These subjective observations then generate and guide a process of interrogation that is aimed at identifying how cultural assumptions pre-determine expectations of 'the way things are'. Recognition of the habituated expectations of what something is facilitates a broadening of one's perceptual knowledge and enables one to remain open to experience. I describe this process in chapter three. This open and curious attitude was a way of engaging with the world that resonated with ideas I had that link to ethical ways of being, which for me is about valuing sensitivity to people and the environment. Not only did the phenomenological process drive this project but it is also an approach to being in the world that I aim to embed in the work.

Modes of Vision

A mode of vision, which singles sight out from the other senses became prevalent after the 1800s when Goethe's optical experiments began developing a physiological understanding of sight.[4] This mode of vision is based on the Cartesian dualism of subject and object, implying a single perspective and distance between the observer and the observed. In *Downcast Eyes,* Martin Jay asserts that the natural physiological dominance of the ocular in combination with cultural practices focused on expanding the human capacity to see through the development of devices such as telescopes, microscopes and cameras, contributed to the emergence of a 'scopic regime' in twentieth century Europe.[5] The ocularcentric viewpoint has enabled humans to feel a sense of mastery and control of the world, as surveillance and spectacle are often aided by these devices.[6] It is focused on the objects of vision and excludes consideration of the viewer's own connection with and embeddedness in the world. The ocularcentric view deals with the world disregarding multisensory aspects and personal experiences.

Darkness, however, denies the ocular and plunges us into an embodied mode of visuality. Embodied vision is a way of seeing that acknowledges the multi-sensory and operates in contrast to scopic models of vision. The embodied mode engages with the world in intimate, sensory, participatory and multi-dimensional ways. Shifting from a viewpoint dominated by the visual to an embodied mode of being involves a transformation in consciousness with potentially significant implications. Susan Best argues that to be immersed in relationship with the world prevents disembodied observation from the outside, which regards the external world in terms of our use or mastery of it.[7]

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[4] Jonathan Crary, Techniques of the Observer (Massachusetts: MAssachusetts Institue of Technology, 1990) 71.
[5] Martin Jay, Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994) 3.
[6] Jay, Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought 3.
[7] Susan Best, "Elemental Constructions: Women Artists and Sculpture in the Expanded Field," What Is Installation? An Anthology of Writings on Australian

The heightened sense of the bodily in darkness can create an opening to the possibility of recognizing that self and other are permeable and inseparable. To call for embodiment is not, however, to imagine that a nostalgic return to the senses will solve the complex social and environmental problems of the world. It is to enlist a set of attitudes that may help provide alternative ways to consider issues, which, Best suggests involve "...a decentering of the sovereignty of humankind: humankind is no longer in charge of the environment but utterly contingent upon it."[8] Our survival depends on cultivating ways to value and positively engage with the environment. To care for ourselves is to care for the environment.

Merleau-Ponty's view is that we are embedded in the world in ways that we are often not aware of and he developed ideas that suggest ways to make explicit our implicit connection with the world.[9] These ideas were explored by Minimalist artists like Robert Morris in the fifties, who investigated the interaction of the bodily with sculptural works. During the sixties and seventies assertions of the primacy of direct perceptual experience served to counter Modernism's emphasis on the ocular and reverencing of the art object.[10] Artists explored multi-sensory practices linked with social, political and cultural critiques, particularly in the field of installation work. Rosalind Krauss discusses ways that the sensory was enlisted to destabilize the optical and to highlight unconscious aspects of the rational during the first half of the twentieth century. The installation art which has developed since the 1970s often immerses a viewer in multi-sensory experience, drawing attention to

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Installation Art, ed. Geczy and Genocchio (Sydney: Power Publications, 2001) 187.

[8] Best, "Elemental Constructions: Women Artists and Sculpture in the Expanded Field," 191.

[9] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences," The Primacy of Perception, ed. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Evanston, Illinois: North Western University Press, 1964) 61.

[10] Jones, Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology and Contemporary Art 42.

alternate modes of visuality and so interrupts habitual visual and mental perceptions.[11]

The modes of vision that operate in a culture change as technological possibilities evolve. Vision is mediated by cultural and technological practices. For example, Jutte notes that the invention of the cinema contributed significantly to a disembodied voyeuristic viewpoint.[12] Similarly, he suggests that the ubiquitous daily presence of television and computer screens also perpetuate a form of disembodied vision, creating psychological distance between self and the world.[13] New media practices have become a vehicle for artistic investigations of new cultural modes of representation and interaction. Artists often draw on new technological possibilities to explore new ways of seeing. Caroline Jones suggests that the quest for embodiment is currently surfacing in the contemporary installation work of many artists working in new media who seek to redress the narrow sensory range of new technologies. Sensation, immersion and interactivity are salient features of these works.[14]

Dave Hickey suggests that the art created in a particular time and place is often a compensatory gesture, "an effort to replace those pleasures and comforts that circumstance and technology are presently taking away".[15] I enlist the sensory to draw attention to what has only recently become normative – the contemporary sensorium now engages us in virtual realities and the physical world is one from which we are becoming dislocated. I see my project as an intervention in contemporary cultural practices of representation, as it steps outside everyday habitual perceptual modes to consider our current sense of embodiment. Using a dark installation environment to elicit an embodied response, I approach the contemporary

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[11] N. De Oliveira, Oxley, N., and Petry, M., Installation Art in the New Millenium (London: Thames and Hudson, 2003) 49.
[12] Robert Jutte, A History of the Senses: From Antiquity to Cyberspace (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2005) 300.
[13] Jutte, A History of the Senses: From Antiquity to Cyberspace 304.
[14] Jones, Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology and Contemporary Art 6.
[15] Dave Hickey, "Tropical Scholarship," Terestia Fernandez: Blind Landscape, ed. David Louis Norr (ed.) (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2009) 207.

quest for embodiment from an analogue perspective to raise questions about our perceptual engagement with the world.

The Field: Print and Installation

I locate my project within the field of print installation work, however the concerns of the work link with ideas explored during the twentieth century in painting, sculpture and more recently in the wider arena of installation art. The project has conceptual links with minimal art of the 1950s that drew attention to the viewing space itself. In chapter two I discuss the writing and work of Robert Morris in relation to this. I also sketch a pathway through twentieth century art practices, locating examples of works that enlist the sensory to destabilise the optical. These include Beuys, Rothko and Turrell.

The project connects more directly formally and conceptually with the concerns of installation art, which emerged as a practice in the 1960s. Installation art is comprised of diverse intentions and practices but the common concern is "to heighten the viewer's awareness of how objects are positioned (installed) in a space, and of our response to that arrangement."[16] The phenomenal possibilities of installation art then include an emphasis on subjective experience, on immersive and heightened experience and on the generation of meaning by the viewer.

My project explores the representation of perceptual experiences of darkness, using installation strategies that destabilise the familiar. The project is located specifically within a field of contemporary artists who engage with ideas about perception and darkness in relation to the environment, focussing on artworks that deal with the concept of an embodied relationship to darkness and utilise phenomenal strategies to engage viewers on a sensory level. In chapter two I discuss in detail contemporary works in which dark, immersive environments that engage the sensory and promote reflection on the world. Eliasson,

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[16] Claire Bishop, But Is It Installation Art?, 2007, Available: www.tate.org.uk/tateetc/issue3/butisitinstallationart.htm. Cited 20-9-10

Kusama, Fernandez, Hofshi, Bitters, Seigel, Silveira and Pien deal with ideas about the perception of darkness and relationship to the environment in their works and develop analogue strategies to extend the sensory.

Because of the capacity for reproduction, prints have traditionally been a means of cultural transmission. Now, however, digital technology has become the dominant form of media.[17] This shift in the positioning of print creates new territory for print media to engage with current media practices. Furthermore, John Alston suggests that factors in the realm of technology have prompted developments within printmaking. For example, "...a shift from tempura to oil painting effects...had a role in the developments of copperplate burin work".[18] Practices external to printmaking can fertilise printmaking practices. I draw on installation strategies to infuse new life to analogue technologies and position print within installation practices and I discuss these in chapter two.

John Buckley writes that darkness "...has frequently been viewed by contemporary artists as a central metaphor for aspects of the existential void and the feelings of emptiness, alienation and uncertainty which seem to be part of the collective experience of living at this particular moment in our history."[19] I draw on the idea that a journey through darkness can symbolise existential questioning in this project. While I discuss contemporary examples of work that deals with darkness in chapter two, some background for the project is located in historical prints. Metaphysical questions have often emerged in prints, as Alston states; "...the making of a print inherently

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[17] While print media once were the domain of information exchange, current cultural practices increasingly operate in the space-less digital realm. Jonathan Crary suggests that the conditions and technologies of cultural creation and reception in the late twentieth century are radically different to earlier modes of spectatorship. Installation artists have experimented with the perceptual and cognitive possibilities that might be possible with these new media. Others have used the new media to reflect on these shifts and question the processes through which we gain sensory information.

[18] David Alston, "Night Thoughts," Under Cover of Darkness: Night Prints (London: Arts Council of Great Britain, 1986) 11.

[19] John Buckley, "Nocturne: Images of Night and Darkness from Colonial to Contemporary," (Mornington: Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery, 2002) 21.

involves the dialectic exchange between light and dark."[20] For example, Odilon Redon's print captures this sense of existential void as a solitary figure is scrutinised by eyes that emerge from the darkness (Figure 1). The metaphors that have been associated with darkness have changed over time and are evident in historical prints. The ways that darkness and the night have been depicted since the seventeenth century provide some insight into both the anxieties and thinking of the era and also reveal developments in technology.

Figure 1.
Odilon Redon, *I Continued to Gaze on the Chair* (1896)
Lithograph, 253 x 181mm

In Rembrandt's hand rendered print, *The Three Trees*, (1643) the dark environment overshadows the small human figure, and the atmospheric shafts of light allude to the metaphysical. (Figure 2) Light was associated with good and the spiritual and darkness with evil. Rembrandt's prints are characteristic of the time, exploiting these associations with light and dark and manifesting a concern for moral anxieties, often explicitly depicting scenes from the Bible.

[20] Alston, "Night Thoughts," 9.

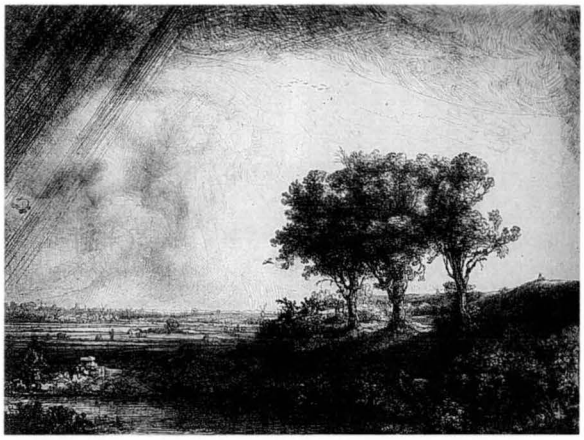

Figure 2
Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Three Trees* (1643)
Etching, 213 x 279 mm

A century later, Goya chronicled the circumstances of his time in his work. Particularly memorable are the *Caprichos* (1799) series, in which he condemns superstition and the 'sleep of reason' (Figure 3). Darkness creates an atmosphere of nightmare. This era heralded the beginning of the Enlightenment when the world was conceived of in rational and scientific terms rather than in religious and moral terms.

Figure 3
Francisco Goya, *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters*, Plate 43 of Los Caprichos (1799)
Etching, 215 x 150 mm

The Shipwreck (1820), a print based on Turner's painting of the same name (1805), portrays human disaster in the face of primal forces of nature (Figure 4). Darkness underscores the drama and the terrifying aspects of this. Realism and horror combine to paint a picture of the high risk associated with

the exploration of the world at that time. The quest to know and understand the world was primary and printed maps from this time show that knowledge of the world was still incomplete. Voyages of exploration were into the darkness of the unknown.

Figure 4
William Miller after Joseph Turner, *The Shipwreck* (1820)
Engraving, size unknown

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, images of the sublime portrayed nature overwhelming the human but demonstrate the shift to a growing capacity to transcend the limits of the human condition. Travel became a comfortable leisure activity. A more detached appreciation of the terror and beauty of the forces of nature became possible. Earlier religious conceptions were replaced with this rational mastery of the world (Figure 6).

Figure 5
Egloffstein, *Black Canon* (1860)

Engraving, 203 x 285 mm

In the twentieth century prints of the night imagery deals less with the spiritual or the conquest of the world and engages more with the impact we have on the world and each other. Increasingly, the urban has overtaken the natural environment. In Gertrude Hermes' print, *Through the Windscreen*, (1926) the view through the windscreen of a car travelling through the night shows car headlights illuminating the road ahead, beside which the powerlines and the trees compete for dominance (Figure 7).

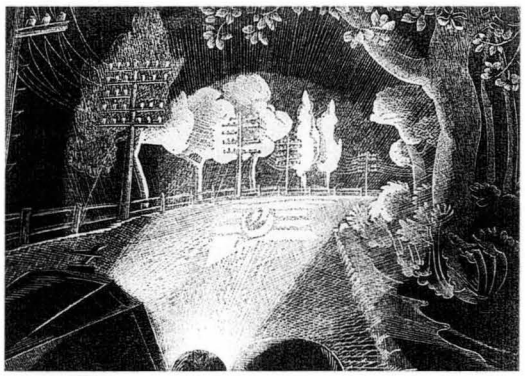

Figure 6.
Gertrude Hermes, *Through the Windscreen* (1926)
Woodcut, 178 x 128 mm

This concern for the environment is made explicit in the print *Three Trees and Highrise* (date unknown), which surfaced briefly on the internet in 2011. It comments directly on the changing environment (Figure 8). It juxtaposes a section of Rembrandt's print with imagery of highrise buildings overtaking the landscape. Human achievement has become more focused on the material world overshadowing a sense of connection with the natural world.

Figure 7.
Artist unknown, *Three Trees and Highrise* (date unknown, cited on web, 15-1-2010)
Digital collage

Finally, the recent digital prints by David Stephenson of cities at night (2009) capture the technological sublime – the contemporary sublime is now found in human technological feats rather than in nature (Figure 9). Humans have indeed conquered the night. Even the dark sky is obliterated over a city.

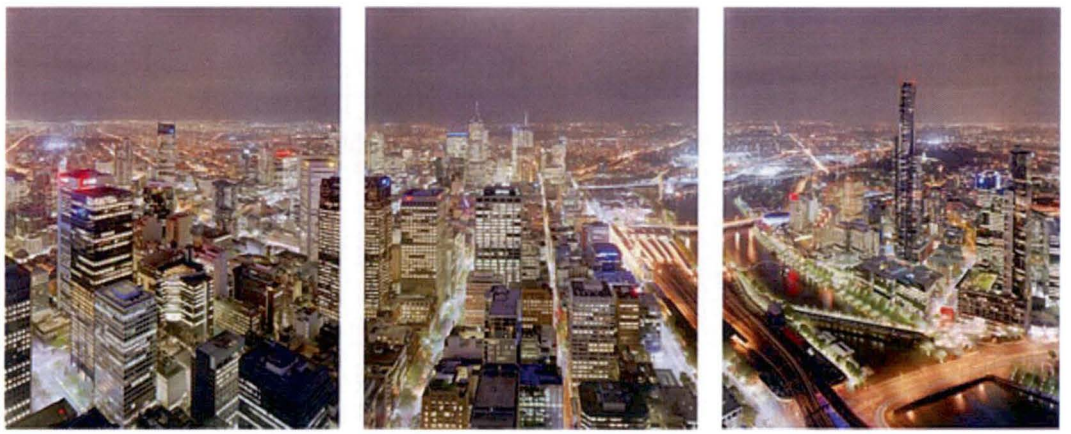

Figure 8.
David Stephenson, *Melbourne, Rialto Tower East 1* (2009),

Digital prints, 35" x 28" images

In the works just discussed, the viewer's position progressively moves from being located within and connected to the natural environment to being located in the urban. In my work I reverse this positioning. Rather than create images of the night that a viewer may observe from panoptic and detached viewpoints, I render aspects of the experience in intimate and multi-sensory work. Within the final installation the viewer is projected back in the non-urban environment, immersed in a darkened space with no familiar points of reference. While the contemporary night no longer conjures primal terror, it still poses elemental questions about the anxiety of existence.

The cultural conditions in which we find ourselves now include both the physical world and the non-physical world of technological culture. I position the print as a means of encoding physical information to strategically intervene in what has become normative in our sensorium. Richard Field in his *Sentences on Printed Art*, said "Prints...embody a condition of modernism – the conflict between man and machine..."[21] This holds true for both the

[21] Richard Field, "Sentences on Printed Art," Art on Paper 14.2 (2009).

analogue and the digital print. The analogue print, however, can physically represent human experience in a way that strategically interrupts the virtual realities that we increasingly inhabit.

Methodology

During this project I adopted a phenomenological approach to making the work and to considering the ways that I wanted the work to operate. I was interested in the *experience* of things rather than the *actual* appearance of things. Gosetti-Ferencei states "Phenomenology is a descriptive philosophy which attempts to get at the essence of what is through description of the structure of its appearance...as objects of consciousness."[22] The observed phenomena are manifestations of the active process of perception, rather than objects themselves. The early research involved an experiential exploration of nocturnal phenomena. When roaming the bush and streets at night I paid attention to how it felt and what I noticed. (I discuss this in more detail in chapter three.)

The project moved through several phases and each one had distinct questions associated with it and I discuss these in more detail in chapter three. The first exploratory phase engaged with this phenomenological methodology, which was designed to base the project in experiences of the nocturnal environment. I also read a range of texts to ascertain how my experience of the night was affirmed by or differed from others' in order to help identify the cultural assumptions associated with darkness. During this stage I also explored ways of recording my experiences of the night. One of the challenges of the project was finding ways to render the phenomenal in visual terms. In order to address this I explored mark making in print that expressed the experiential and I sought ways of working that included other sense modalities. This led to making marks derived from the haptic rather

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[22] Jennifer Gosetti-Ferencei, The Ecstatic Quotidian: Phenomenological Sightings in Modern Art and Literature (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2007) 14.

than the visual. Using print processes I collected a range of marks derived from tactile interactions with forms. The printed marks do not describe visual forms, rather they are fragments that signify a sensate engagement with the unseen in the dark. I explored strategies that locate the visual via embodied processes, later combining the physical mark making possibilities of the analogue print with installation strategies.

The most difficult part of the project was the second phase where I worked to bring together the experiential and the theoretical questions about perception in relation to darkness. I needed to identify the most useful framework with which to articulate the way I had come to see nocturnal perception as a useful way to assert the importance of embodied vision and the phenomenal attitude. During this stage drew I on the disparate theoretical reading that I had been doing in the areas of perception, phenomenology, cognitive psychology, visual culture and modes of vision.

Gossetti-Ferencei makes the "...observation that the quotidian quality of everyday life is suspended when it is noticed, and that this suspension leads to manifold and potentially endless reflections on the nature of being in the world."[23] I suggest that paying attention to the sensory can heighten a sense of awareness. For the purposes of my project, the heightened state draws attention to the multi-sensory nature of experience. Wonder and uncertainty can be simultaneously experienced in the body. It is this kind of aesthetic and phenomenal effect I am interested in exploring in my work - an oscillation between recognition and wonder and in opposition to this, an uncertainty and slippage. This effect can be deployed as a purposeful strategy to precipitate questions about perception. Print facilitates the reproduction of images in multiple and shifting states and by this means I explored ways to focus a viewer's attention on particular sensory affects. Finally, the assemblage of each set of prints was considered in terms of foregrounding sensory affect and of activating the space as the viewer moved through the work.

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[23] Gosetti-Ferencei, The Ecstatic Quotidian: Phenomenological Sightings in Modern Art and Literature 14.

The project developed through extensive experimentation which began with an investigation in two-dimensional print, considering figurative visual imagery, expanded into an exploration of gestural mark making, the fragmented image and of ways to activate space to create installation environments. The potential of print to reproduce images in different states facilitated possibilities for the construction and fragmentation of imagery, as repeated forms alter and echo, generating heightened effects. I configure these in ways that strategically focus on the tactile, inviting an intimate and experiential engagement. These environments foreground the multisensory in unfamiliar ways, thus generating uncertainty.

Outcomes of the Project

In this work I explore phenomena of the night through combining printmaking and installation practices. I consider how perception changes in the dark and the intermingling of the senses becomes more apparent, precipitating a heightened awareness of embodied responses to nocturnal phenomena. The work is concerned with how the phenomenal affects of darkness in the environment, experienced as embodied vision, can reflect on the contemporary sensorium. I have drawn on phenomenological ideas and methods and on my own nocturnal experiences to reflect on aspects of the changing contemporary night, creating a series of print-based installations that extend the possibilities for sensory affect.

This investigation began with the two-dimensional print but extended into explorations of printing on different substrates and three-dimensional strategies, which better met the aim of conveying embodied vision in the dark. The extensive experimentation conducted in this area has resulted in works that draw together diverse methods for combining prints in installation environments. They operate in darkness, requiring the viewer to navigate through an unfamiliar environment, relying on sensory perceptions beyond the visual. Drawing attention to felt experience and expanding the physical aspects of viewing was a central aim of the investigation. In terms of the

possibilities of the two-dimensional print surface, I have explored mark making in order to capture gestural bodily movement, which points to sensory apprehension. I embed phenomenal marks of nocturnal experiences and configure them in ways that focus on the spatial and the tactile, inviting an intimate and experiential engagement. I attempt to disrupt the virtual and the visual with the haptic, and posit perceptual questions that point towards the significance of other sensory modes. The final installation is designed to operate as a perceptual intervention in everyday modes of viewing, aimed at re-activating a viewer's relationship to darkness.

The final installation of the project is within a dark, labyrinthine gallery structure, which has associations with the inner journey, established through movement into an interior space. The work requires viewers to navigate a realm of visual disintegration, in which organic impressions hover on the edge of visibility. Everyday modes of seeing are destabilised through encounters with fragments of imagery that hover between form and feeling, imagination and reality. The senses are addressed by assembling printed forms in ways that draw attention to the space in which they are encountered, and by exploiting the uncertainty and irrational associations that are characteristic of unfamiliar nocturnal experiences. The imagery suggests encounters with the nocturnal, organic world and draws attention to the perceptual process itself. This exploration of ideas and processes suggests a reading of the night which points to the richness of sensuous engagement with the world, encouraging the viewer to reconsider their own relationship to the world in darkness.

I suggest that a yearning for the loss of the instinctive, the raw and sensate can be represented by the physical print, as an analogue index. However, the work resists a nostalgic reading as there is no comfort found in the works, which generate a sense of disorientation. Deborah Cherry is similarly cautious about the idea that "a new sensory avant-garde...will triumph over an older optical order." [24] In this work, the embodied experience is uncomfortable and laden with a sense of dislocation from the physical world. There is no inherent

[24] Deborah Cherry, "A Sea of the Senses," Right About Now: Art and Theory since the 1990s, ed. Schavemaker & Rakier (Amsterdam: Valiz Publishers, 2007) 23.

comfort in the physical, but rather the immersive and sensate experiences of the installations deal with the anxiety associated with darkness.

The works invite the viewer to consider ideas about visibility, embodiment, experience, perception and their relationship with the world, by appealing to the corporeal imagination to enact the process of perception. The works suggest that an alternative mode of being exists, one in which embodied vision re-establishes agency and choice for the viewer, and one in which we remember that we are immersed in the environment to the extent that our survival depends on it. This strategy suggests that there are ways to rethink our relationship with the environment and ourselves.

CHAPTER TWO

"We have to interpret more in twilight,
We have to make ourselves part of the act,
We have to interpret, we have to project more.
But also the thing itself in twilight
Challenges us to be aware
Of how we are projecting on to the event itself.
We are part of producing the event."[1]

Introduction: The context for the project

This project explores embodied vision, a way of being in the world in the dark, which acknowledges our inter-relational engagement with the environment. It is a mode of vision which is multi-sensory and thus an alternative to the primarily ocular-centric view of the world as separate to self.
Heightening awareness of the perceptual process itself is an element of the work and serves to draw attention to more internal aspects of experience.

In terms of the conceptual basis of the project, in this chapter I trace a trajectory of explorations and developments in the understanding of how vision is embodied. In chapter one I outlined the theoretical and practical context for my project and I explore this in more depth in this chapter, drawing on several key writers. Martin Jay coined the term the 'scopic regime' in the 1990s to describe the growing dominance and changes in ways of looking that accelerated during the nineteenth century.[2] The philosophy of Merleau-Ponty addresses questions of embodiment and has provided an argument to

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[1] Robin Bernstein, "Rodney King. Shifting Modes of Vision, and Anna Deavere Smith's Twilight: Los Angeles, 1992," Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism 14.2 (2000): 121-34.
[2] Martin Jay, Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1994) 599.

counter the dominance of the optical in the first half of the twentieth century, informing my practice and that of other artists. I discuss the earliest primal experiences of darkness and then the optical experiments of the 1800s, conducted in darkness that discovered the physiological processes of vision. Jonathan Crary links these to the contemporary context. Artists often work in the space created by advances in new thinking and technology to explore possibilities for new ways of seeing, so I cite related artworks that were created at various points in this historical trajectory. Rosalind Krauss' critique of ocular-centric artwork during the early 20th century offers an analysis of alternative approaches, derived from instinctive and bodily expressions. These relate to strategies adopted in my work. I locate examples of early explorations of embodied visuality in art during the twentieth century, the first of these being Impressionism. The project connects with Minimalist concerns with bodily experiences of space and I discuss Robert Morris in relation to these. Robert Morris' work, the *Philadelphia Labyrinth* (1974), draws the viewer's attention to spatial perception, which informs my consideration of the use of space (Figure 17). Paul Crowther discusses the phenomenal characteristics of art, arguing that it is made in relation to the human so it inherently engages the human.

The contemporary contextual artwork in this chapter illuminates different aspects of my own practice, both conceptual and formal. I focus on how embodied vision is realized in the works discussed and how darkness is deployed as a setting, as subject or as metaphor in the work. Of particular interest for my project is the way in which other artists explore bodily apprehension and relationship to dark aspects of the environment. So I locate examples of works where these three interests intersect – darkness, embodied perception and relationship to the environment. There are few examples of this intersection in the field of print installation, so I include works using other media, which explore strategies and approaches similar to my own.

I have found that most contemporary artists who are exploring the use of dark spaces are working in the field of installation and are generally working either with light or with new media practices. Artists such as Eliasson and Turrell

explore the subjective perceptual effects of light to draw attention to the bodily component of perception. I install analogue print objects in darkened space, which has required experimentation and consideration of the effects of lighting. I discuss specific analogue installation works that operate in dark spaces and connect with my conceptual concerns, suggesting that embodied vision is a useful viewing position from which to reconsider the nature of our engagement with the world – both the environment and cultural practices of engagement.

My analysis of contextual artworks includes discussion of how artworks activate the space and how staging strategies contribute to particular readings for the works. I approach the discussion of artworks in phenomenological terms, meaning that description of the work focusing on affect is primary. This is important in terms of the nature of this project, which deals with the affect of artwork. It is also a difficulty because in fact I have not been able to experience first hand many of the works I discuss. To overcome this, each work is illustrated and I approach a phenomenological appreciation by describing the work and how I imagine it operates and when possible accessing statements by the artist and finally by locating writing by people who have experienced the works first hand.

I have not found other print installation works that deal specifically with the subject matter of my project. I situate my practice in the specific field of print installation, which of course is one medium among many in the field of installation art. I bring together installation strategies and the analogue print as an embodiment of the tactile to assert the phenomenological. This project activates the print to operate in installation as a form of perceptual intervention, a break in habitual modes of viewing.

Theoretical Context:

Subjective vision

The physiological understanding of vision has developed since the 1800s from one which simply isolated the eye in order to understand vision to a more sophisticated conception of vision which includes multiple bodily systems and the ways that these are involved in the perceptive process. The fully

embodied conception of vision is my primary interest; however, several significant developments during the twentieth century that led to this more complete understanding of vision as an embodied process are relevant to my project. I discuss these in order to develop a picture of the conceptual basis for my own thinking and practice.

Prior to the 1800s, in Western thought, visual sensations were understood to be derived from objective reality. Vision was considered passive and disembodied as it was supposed that the eye simply registered information from the external world. This conception of disembodied vision changed to what Crary termed 'subjective' vision, as a physiological understanding of vision emerged. In the 1820s, Goethe conducted an extensive study of optics focused on experiments with light and dark, using lenses, mirrors, coloured shapes and observations of natural phenomena. His methodology involved direct experiential contact, which focused on looking closely as the basis for descriptive generalization and greater understanding. Goethe's approach avoided the reductive scientific view and maintained openness to perceptual phenomena and now serves as a model for understanding phenomenological enquiry.[3] For example, Goethe made detailed observations in the 'Theory of Colours' of the ways that in low light conditions the eye is attracted to light, seeking to perceive more in darkness, as one of the primary means by which we connect "with the external world"[4] (Figure 9). His observations of phenomena like the after image, a retinal event that occurs subsequent to visual input, established that vision was a bodily process. These observations led to numerous subsequent scientific studies, which affirmed the physiological and active aspects of vision. This marked a paradigm shift in understanding how vision occurs. Sight could no longer be regarded a reliable source of truth and was understood as a subjective activity. [5]

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[3] David Seamon, Goethe's Way of Science: A Phenomenology of Nature, ed. Seamon and Zajonc (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998) 1.
[4] Hans Goethe, Theory of Colours, trans. Charles Lock Eastlake (London: Frank Cass and Co. Ltd, 1967) 2.
[5] Jonathan Crary, Suspensions of Perception (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1999) 11.

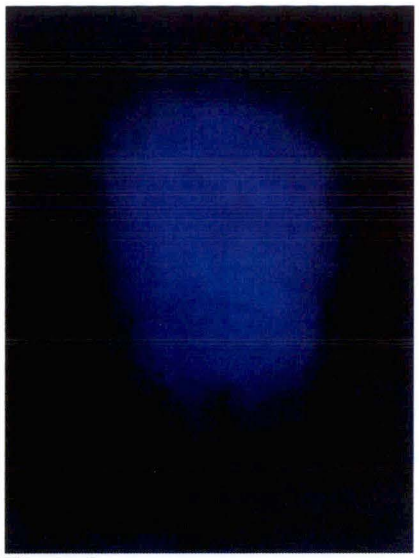

Figure 9.
Helen Kennedy, *Darkness Weakened by Light (Goethe)*, (2010)
Oil on canvas, 120 x 90 cm

The artwork that emerged during the period in which early understandings of vision occurred focused on purely optical effects. Redon's work in the late 1800s is preoccupied with looking, often depicting disembodied eyes that overwhelm the viewer or the subject in the work. His stated aim was to "place the visible at the service of the invisible" [6] He makes manifest an inner world – for Redon this was the age of the ocular and what is evident in his work is a paranoid vision, one that exposes the inner by being watched (Figure 10).

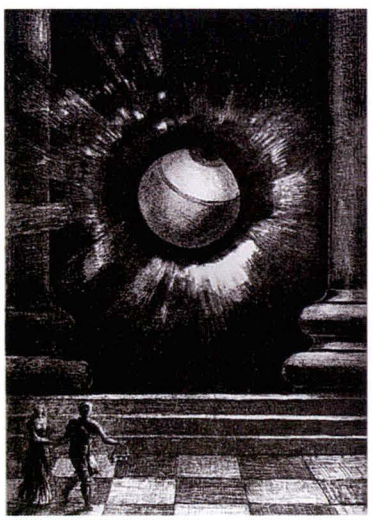

Figure 10.
Odilon Redon, *Vision (No. 8 of Dans le Reve)*, (1879)
Lithograph, 273 x 194 mm

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[6] Alfred Werner, "Introduction to the Dover Edition," The Graphic Works of Odilon Redon (New York: Dover Publications 2005) xii.

The scientific focus on the *experience* of vision in the late 1800s inspired early twentieth century artists to move away from the representational conventions of single point perspective, the system of representation that renders the world as if seen through a singular viewing position. Artists began to explore optical effects in their work. James Whistler's nocturnes in the late 1800s, for example, dissolved the subject matter, instead focusing on the atmospheric effects themselves. *Nocturne in Black and Gold* (1875), has moved away from representation; instead it deals with more tonal and textural effects that build a sense of diffuse twilight, effectively inviting a more sensate response to the work (Figure 11).

Figure 11.
James Whistler, *Nocturne in Black and Gold: The Falling Rocket*, (1875)
Oil painting, 60.3 x 46.6 cm

These kinds of possibilities for exploration of 'subjective' vision are similarly evident in Impressionist works. Monet's lily pond paintings demonstrate this – he painted and repainted the lily pond in his garden, paying acute attention to the nuances and changes in colour and tone in different light conditions (Figure 12). This one from the Musée de l'Orangerie is a section from a large series which are installed in oval rooms, surrounding the viewer and so adding an immersive element to the viewing of the work.

Figure 12.
Claude Monet, Reflections of Clouds on the Water-Lily Pond (1920)
Oil on canvas, 200 x 1276 cm

Paradoxically while the conception of 'subjective' vision in the later 1800s located a corporeal aspect of vision, the scientific model isolated vision from consideration of the other senses and its condition of actual embodiment. Rosalind Krauss describes the way that early twentieth century artists drew on nineteenth century optical theory, arguing that painting became the re-creation of the surface of the eye. The picture plane followed the logic of the retinal field.[7] The artist's sensorium was rendered through just one sense, the sense of sight and was transformed in this process into abstractions.[8]

Ocularcentrism

While early twentieth century artists explored ways to render the optical, a school of European philosophers also began critiquing the implications of the focus on the visual. In the 1920s, Heidegger was critical of what he termed Western ocularcentrism. He discussed the ways that sight objectifies, perpetuating the separation of subject and object and rendering thought separate to experience.[9] He was concerned that it led to a conquering of the

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[7] Rosalind Krauss, The Optical Unconscious (Massachusetts: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1993) 11.
[8] Krauss, The Optical Unconscious 11.
[9] Jay, Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth Century French Thought 272.

world by sight, connected with attitudes of dominance and manipulation. Instead, Heidegger promoted a mode of being that was aligned with the practices of hearing as an alternative to the visual, valuing listening, belonging and the unseen.

During the 1950s, Merleau-Ponty developed Heidegger's ideas further. He also moved away from a purely optical viewpoint and was concerned with the centrality of the body in perception. Merleau-Ponty proposed that scientific vision must be overturned in favour of a different understanding of lived space. He suggested that in contrast with the scientific model of vision, the artist understands that the things we perceive are never seen in their entirety. He suggested that painting can serve as a model for understanding perception and the space of encounter between self and the world. Sensuous experience and lived spatiality can be expressed in the gestures of painting.

Merleau-Ponty cites Cezanne's work as making visible the processes of lived perception (Figure 13). A range of aspects are implicit in a single view of an object. Its visible, measured presence does not account for all aspects of itself or for the field within which it exists or the potentials for its expression. Merleau-Ponty argued that a painter knows this: "The visible world, when looked at through the painter's eye, is recognized as secretive and withholding."[10] A painterly image is then a concentration of the visible, an accumulation of marks of lived depth, evidence of the activity of perception.[11] The idea that visual representation can convey more than simply what is seen starts to explain the notion of 'phenomenological depth', a term that Crowther uses in his explanation of the affect of artworks which I will discuss later. Repeating printed imagery with multiple variations is another way to draw attention to the nuances of a particular lived moment.

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[10] Jennifer Gosetti-Ferencei, The Ecstatic Quotidian: Phenomenological Sightings in Modern Art and Literature (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 2007) 195.

[11] Gosetti-Ferencei, The Ecstatic Quotidian: Phenomenological Sightings in Modern Art and Literature 198.

Figure 13.
Paul Cezanne, *Lac d'Annecy*, (1896)
Oil on canvas, 65 x 81 cm

Merleau-Ponty also developed the idea that our perception is not only embodied but that it is inextricably bound up with the world – we are embedded in the physical world in a way that is invisible to us; we cannot see the conditions of our being. He uses the term 'flesh' to describe the connective tissue between the body and the world. [12] Flesh is "the dehiscence of the seeing into the visible and of the visible into the seeing." [13] We are immersed in and formed by the world. The significance of this idea is that it reminds us that our existence is contingent on the world. This links with the idea that the environment is important to our survival.

Heightened affect

From the 1930s onwards both artists and theorists reacted to the dominance of 'pure' opticality. Krauss charts the emergence of work that refutes the optical logic of modernist art, arguing for the significance of work that did not follow the dominant modernist project that privileged pure opticality. She cited

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[12] 'Flesh' is not understood as the flesh of the body but rather it is the formative medium of both the object and the subject, the underlying condition of both and subject and object communicate through it. Susan Best, "Elemental Constructions: Women Artists and Sculpture in the Expanded Field," What Is Installation? An Anthology of Writings on Australian Installation Art, ed. Geczy and Genocchio (Sydney: Power Publications, 2001) 190.
[13] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, The Visible and the Invisible (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1984) 153.

these as manifestations of the 'optical unconscious', locating examples of art which drew on methods that originated in the psychic or bodily unconscious. What is common to both Krauss and Merleau-Ponty's discussions of visuality is that singling out the purely optical is seen as a distortion of a more fully fleshed out consideration of vision.

Pursuing a different line of thought, Gosetti-Ferencei suggests that the concentrated focus on visual experience evident in Modernist art is different to everyday ways of looking, and that this is significant because the intense and penetrating gaze generates a heightened affect. The familiar becomes strange. Attention to the nature of seeing and to representation leads to "awakening intense seeing, being drawn into mystery, to uncanniness."[14] She suggests that this generates an oscillation between two opposing effects – affirmation and anxiety. The familiar is recognized but slips out of the realm of the known. For example, Duchamp's *Rotoreliefs* (1935) destabilize the visual with printed rotating discs that create pulsing spirals that generate illusions of concavity and convexity, suggesting the erotic and thus bodily sources of visuality (Figure 14). Thus, through an intense focus on the visual, destabilizing haptic effects emerge in this work. This work is of interest for this project not only because of the heightened visuality but also because of the way that secondary associations are built into the work that draw on other sensory associations. The discs are designed to be spun on a music turntable, reinforcing the bodily through the suggestion of pulsing beats of music. In my work I also establish secondary sensory associations that add layers of meaning to the work.

[14] Gosetti-Ferencei, The Ecstatic Quotidian: Phenomenological Sightings in Modern Art and Literature 19.

Figure 14.
Marcel Duchamp, *Disques Avec Spirales (Rotorelief)*, (1923)
Offset lithography

I suggest that paying attention to other sensory modalities can also have the effect of heightening bodily awareness. For the purposes of my project, the heightened state draws attention to the multi-sensory nature of experience. Wonder and uncertainty are simultaneously experienced in the body. It is this kind of aesthetic and phenomenal effect I am interested in exploring in my work - an oscillation between recognition and wonder and in opposition to this, an uncertainty and slippage. This effect can be deployed as a purposeful strategy to precipitate questions about perception. I am also interested in how the different haptic effects emerging in this optically focussed work occur as a physiological process of perception. They elicit an embodied response by triggering bodily processes.

Joseph Beuys also sought to expand the notion of art beyond the visual to activate other sensory elements. Beuys' work, *Plight* (1958-85), was comprised of rolls of felt that lined the walls of the gallery while in the middle of the space a black piano with an unprinted, blank score and a thermometer were situated (Figure 15). The exhibition developed as a response to industrial noise outside the gallery and so had a connotation of insulation. The piano drew attention to the silencing effect of the felt. The insulating effect of the felt also became evident in the gallery when it was full of people as the room became warm. The room thus had contradictory effects embedded in it

- for some the silencing and heat were oppressive, for others warm and protective. In either case, a viewer became aware of bodily responses.

Figure 15.
Joseph Beuys, *Plight*, (1958-85)
Felt rolls, piano, musical score, blackboard

He said, in relation to the work "...I think that vision plays only one role and there are twelve other senses at least implied in looking at an artwork."[15] Beuys linked the effects embedded in this work with wider concepts, one of which was to expand ideas about what constituted art at that time to include sensory affect. The title provides a clue to the intent of the work, which invites consideration of the position of the individual in the world – the question is whether this is felt to be positive or negative. Like Beuys, I also establish connections to the sensory via the selection of materials. I have chosen different printing substrates based on the linkage between the effects they produce and the associations with the particular concept that I am working with. This work is particularly interesting in relation to one of the works that I have created using felt. While I also use felt to muffle sound, it is deployed in relation to space. A narrow corridor of felt suggests an intimate encounter with an organic environment and invites touch, but this closeness and quietness can conversely feel constricting.

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[15] Joseph Beuys, "Joseph Beuys: Transcript of Talk at the Anthony D'offay Gallery, October 1985," Audio Arts Magazine 8.1 (1985).

Embodied Vision

As I have outlined, during the twentieth century artists increasingly sought to undermine the domination of the optic and its association with the rational by enlisting the senses. The quest for embodiment is a recurring theme for artists. Cherry discusses the growing interest in the sensory since the late fifties and the emergence of immersive art environments. Jones also charts this trend in her curatorial essay for the exhibition *Sensorium* in 2006. She argues that modernism isolated the senses. For example, Impressionism focused on sight and Abstraction similarly valorized the optical.[16] Jones suggests that the fragmentation of the senses enabled a colonization of the body and that sight was the primary vehicle for the enforcement of bureaucratization (via surveillance and panoptic vision).[17] Currently the exploration of embodiment links with a questioning of what is real at a time when reality is often virtual and disembodied.

I suggest that the current quest for embodiment may be seen as an urge to affirm our existence – just as I sought to assert my physical presence against the darkness as a child. The need to feel the living body is a way of confirming our existence in the face of virtual annihilation. My work sits within this renewed interest in the sensory that is emerging as increasingly the world engages with virtual and digital modalities, which operate within a narrow sensory range. However, what is becoming evident as new technologies develop ways to engage the senses is that a return to the senses offers no simple solution to the problematic dominant optical mode. What has emerged in my own work is that despite this yearning for embodiment and the search for a stronger sense of reality, the work makes manifest a sense of alienation from the bodily and the environment. The works mirror the cultural feeling of dislocation from the physical world.

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[16] Caroline Jones, Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology and Contemporary Art (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2006) 8.

[17] Jones, Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology and Contemporary Art 10.

The Phenomenal in Art

Having discussed the development of theories and representations of visual experience, I will now examine in more detail ideas about the phenomenal in art. The perception of art is also experiential although it has often been evaluated more in terms of what it says and is. Susan Sontag countered this tendency to value content over experience in *Against Interpretation*. She argued for the value of the primary experience of art in order to counter the dulling of our senses in what she described as 'a culture of excess', which results in "...a steady loss of sharpness in our sensory experience." [18] Sontag argued that a descriptive approach to artwork leads to a greater appreciation of the sensory aspects of the work.[19] While a phenomenological appreciation of an artwork may not replace other forms of interpretation of the work, it can certainly render it more alive and begin to describe what is not comprehensible to rational forms of thought. Descriptions of artworks speak to the imagination, allowing access to modes of thinking and appreciation that are not accessed via more analytic approaches.

Alan Paskow also promotes the descriptive approach to reviewing artworks. Paskow in *The Paradoxes of Art*, suggests that the phenomenological aspects of an artwork

> ... can speak to and make a claim on some feature of our being, an aspect of ourselves that is not completely attuned to our ordinary, everyday way of thinking and feeling-perceiving...we can temporarily establish... an 'horizon' of separate possibility, an 'as if' subworld that clashes with our everyday horizon of possibility. Out of this opposition, there can eventuate, but only through our willing endorsement, a significant change within our being... [20]

The empathic imaginative response to artwork can also potentially promote a shift in ways of being. This encapsulates the intent of my own project, which is to create what I term a perceptual intervention in everyday modes of being.

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[18] Susan Sontag, Against Interpretation, ed. Straus and Giroux Farrar (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1982) 104.
[19] Sontag, Against Interpretation 103.
[20] Alan Paskow, The Paradoxes of Art: A Phenomenological Investigation (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) 234.

I approach the following key contextual artworks by beginning with descriptions of the work as a way of exploring the phenomenological effects. Elements such as the kinds of marks, the arrangement of forms, the way light is used and the configuration of the room become important factors which provide clues as to how the works physically operate and the impacts they may have. My own project has involved close examination of how to mobilize these kinds of elements for phenomenal effect. Crowther argues that 'phenomenological depth' is intrinsic to art because "factors which enable the specifically human character of our cognitive and metaphysical inherence in the universe" are evident in the work.[21] The central concerns of my discussions of the phenomenal effect of artworks – haptic, spatial and heightened perceptual effects - are partly determined by the issues I considered in my own work and have also developed from consideration of the writing of Crowther.

My consideration of the phenomenal focuses on the reciprocal nature of the experience of engaging with an artwork – the relationship between the viewer and an artwork will change as different modes of perception and action are established. So an artwork has distinct effects depending on its formal characteristics, and in my investigation I have explored different sensory possibilities, paying particular attention to space and the fragmented image. The shift from working with large-scale prints in two dimensions to working with three-dimensional space is one that I have considered carefully. Locating oneself through peripatetic experience allows an unfolding and redefining of self in relation to the spatial environment. The phenomenal experience of this is pivotal in fully understanding the work – the sensory brings the work to life and is an essential aspect of it.

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[21] Paul Crowther, Phenomenology of the Visual Arts (Even the Frame) (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009) 29.

Contextual Artists:

Minimalist Concerns: Morris

Cognitive scientists continue to investigate the bodily aspects of vision. James Gibson developed a model of perception that he terms an ecological approach to vision, one which incorporates kinaesthetic processes. Rutherford states that for Gibson "vision is kinaesthetic in that it registers movements of the body just as much as does the muscle-joint-skin system and the inner-ear system".[22] The proprioceptive systems are internal and so he argues that the visual process involves both external and internal sources, from the environment and from itself. So this model of kinaesthetic vision develops the idea of embodied vision into one that acknowledges the input of multiple sensory modes. Perceivers locate themselves in an environment, and what is important is "the significance of surfaces in relation to our body." [23] Perception is then not simply cognitive, nor biological, it is a meaningful positioning of ourselves in an environment. Minimalist artists dealt with ideas about embodied, lived experience and meaningful positioning.

Robert Morris

Robert Morris sought to explore the relationship between the viewer and the work. In *The Present Tense of Space*,[24] he developed the idea that experience is embedded in spatial perception, arguing for a shift in the valuation of experience to **direct** experience, in order to make perceptions more conscious and articulate.[25] Morris argued that the experience of space occurs in real time. This is aligned with the idea that perception is a bodily activity, which unfolds over time. Minimalist work, by paying attention to

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[22] Anne Rutherford, "Cinema and Embodied Affect," (2002), http://archive.sensesofcinema.com/contents/03/25/embodied_affect.html. Cited 11-10-10

[23] James Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (London: Psychology Press, 1986).

[24] Robert Morris, "The Present Tense of Space," Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris, ed. Robert Morris (Massachussets: Massachussets Institute of Technology, 1978) 176.

[25] Morris, "The Present Tense of Space," 204.

experience of space in relation to the body, can slow down the process of perception so that bodily engagement unfolds over time and so the viewer can be more aware of this.

Morris explored the experiential in the *Philadelphia Labyrinth* (1974). Upon entering, the viewer is surrounded by walls extending above head height, forcing one to relinquish knowledge of where one is, and exiting depends on an accumulation of visual and visceral information over time (Figure 16). It is a journey where the ego is temporarily suspended, where the logic of reality yields to the visceral and the sensual.[26]

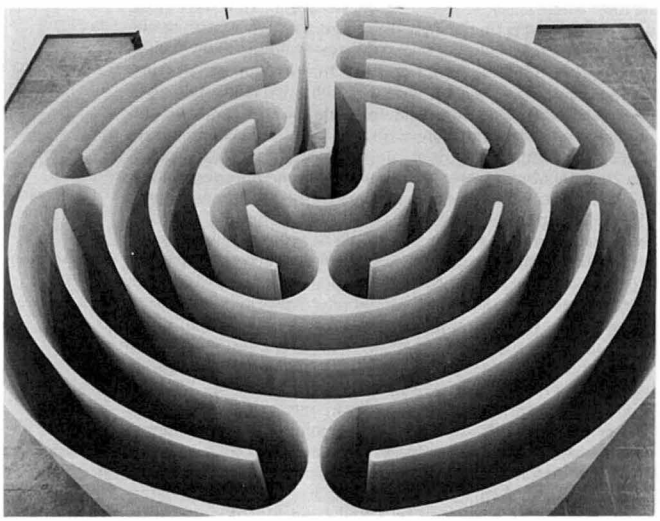

Figure 16.
Robert Morris, *The Philadeplphia Labyrinth*, (1974)

The *Philadelphia Labyrinth* suggested a way to rethink our bodies' relationship to the world – one's position is located inwardly and experientially, shaping the interior space of the self.

> To enter into the realm of darkness – into a labyrinthine space where clear and articulate objects are abolished, where our perceptual being establishes a spatiality without things, where there are no outlines – is to redefine the way our bodies relate to the logic of the world."[27]

It depends on peripatetic wandering. David Norr develops the idea of the peripatetic view further. Its significance is that it "upend(s) the search for what

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[26] Maurice Berger, Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s (New York: Harper and Row, 1989) 159.
[27] Berger, Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s 159.

was constant and universal, encouraging instead more itinerant, ephemeral, and contingent forms of viewing." [28] Locating oneself through peripatetic experience allows an unfolding and redefining of self in relation to the external environment. The labyrinth is an ancient structure that is connected to the inner search for self. Like Morris, I am also interested in "the idea of resuscitating the self – the private, psychological center that gives each of us a sense of control of our lives..."[29]

The installation of the final works in my project are presented within a gallery structure that resembles the labyrinth, thus drawing on these associations and developing the idea of strengthening the inner self through bodily experience. The labyrinthine structure directs attention inwards, interrupting habitual perceptual modes to suggest that we reconsider our relationship to the external environment.

Installation practices and active perception

The Minimalist concerns discussed above, with the expanded space around sculptural work and consideration of the perceptual processes of viewing formed the basis for the installation art that began emerging in the 1970s. Installation became a hybrid practice in which a wide diversity of materials were assembled in order to comment on art practices and institutions and social, political and environmental issues. Installation became a vehicle for conceptual art, which countered the optical by working primarily with language.

The idea of waking up from the 'dream' that we live in, as Walter Benjamin described it, was facilitated in installation art as the divide between art and life was dissolved – the space of the gallery or installation site art reduced the distinction between art and life. Rather these sites became the "place to experience experience".[30] Location and point of view are constantly shifting and this can be brought to the viewer's attention. Real space is experienced in

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[28] David Louis Norr, "The Sculptural Double," Teresita Fernandez: Blind Landscape, ed. David Louis Norr (Zurich: JRP/Ringier, 2009) 135.
[29] Berger, Labyrinths: Robert Morris, Minimalism, and the 1960s 139.
[30] Oxley and Petry Oliveira, Installation Art (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994) 29.

real time, the body moves in relation to the space, the eyes constantly move, varying focal distances, fixing on static or moving images.[31] Installation work immerses the viewer in the space of the art, drawing on the body and its senses so a viewer experiences the work on a phenomenological level. Some installation works are often located outside the gallery altogether in the environment. Andy Goldswothy's *Moonlit Walk* (2002), for example, set up an encounter with the 'real' natural world, a meditative experience that nurtures heightened awareness of self and nature (Figure 17). Viewers were allowed to walk the path at night, and at times when clouds covered the moon the gleaming white gravel path was the only visible thing.

Figure 17.
Andy Goldsworthy, *Moonlit Path* (2002)
Gravel path installation

Installations establish a micro-environment outside the everyday world, a situation in which a viewer is invited to reconsider the outside world. A connection between the viewer and the work is established in the viewing of the work: in the interactive and spatial relationship, and by engaging with the work, the viewer completes the work. Installation art addresses the subjective point of view, inviting the viewer to create meaning through relationship with the work. The work is not an aesthetic end in itself; in fact it is more likely to comment on the pursuit of aesthetics. Meaning is conceptual and derived from interaction with the work.

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[31] Morris, "The Present Tense of Space," 177.

The proliferation of new media since the 1990s has generated conditions that have fundamentally altered how we experience the world, and installation artists have explored the possibilities of this, or conversely commented on the discontinuities and the consequences of new hegemonic uses of media. These have become the subject of many installation works in darkness. Piccinini's work, *Swell* (2000), is an immersive video installation which presents what seems to be giant ocean swell that induces a feeling of sea sickness for the viewer through disorienting movement (Figure 18). In fact, the imagery is made from computer-generated data – what appears to be the natural world is actually the sea of virtual data in which we are awash.

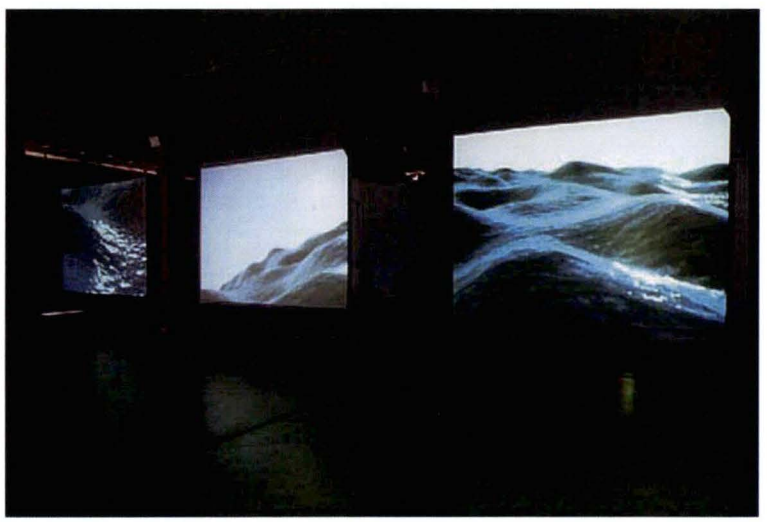

Figure 18.
Patricia Piccinini, *Swell* (2000)
Video installation

In this work, the moving image overwhelms the viewer's sense of capacity to navigate the gallery environment. Technology creates new horizons as it can open up possibilities for perceiving the world by extending our senses but can also close down our capacity to be sensitive to our surroundings.

Crary suggests that installation art now offers possibilities for perceptual and cognitive experiences outside the dominant forms of contemporary media and technology.[32] In these environments habitual visual and intellectual practices can be challenged or disrupted. "The processes through which sensory

[32] Jonathan Crary, "Foreword," Installation Art in the New Millenium, ed. Nicolas de Oliveira (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003) 7.

information is consumed become the object of various strategies of de-familiarisation." [33] Installation art is an ideal forum to consider how current models of vision have transformed the ways that we think about and engage with the world. The increased technological capacity for global connection, speed and information exchange has created a dematerialized and spaceless world. Virtual space has become a normative concept. We live parallel lives, one in the physical world, and another in the virtual world.

Darkness is the absence of light, and darkness is the realm of video installation art. Annette Labedzki, when discussing the genre of installation, described it as "nurtured on electricity and darkness..."[34] The form itself hinges on the play of darkness and light. Black, with its connotations of darkness, is also strongly associated with print – it is the primary ink colour. It is the basis of print practice to make conscious decisions about the use and placement of black. As Matisse said "Black is a force..." [35] It generates a psychological field that suggests the elemental and evokes uncertainty and the existential void. The conjunction of print and installation with darkness is then a fertile combination.

In contrast to much installation work, rather than using real environments or found objects or new media work I create artefacts – evidence of physical interactions relating to investigations of nocturnal phenomena – that I install in the gallery space. Print is a means of physically transferring information from the field – my experience of the dark - to the gallery via the print matrix. In this way I focus attention on the nature of our embodied, physical engagement with the world and how we apprehend that.

Dark spaces: Turrell and Rothko

The night sky links us not only to a sight that early people experienced, but also to ancient time as the star light reaching us now has travelled thousands

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[33] Crary, "Foreword," 7.
[34] Annette Labedzki, Western Art - Video Installation Art - Installation Goes the Technical Way, 2009, Available: http://ezinearticles.com/?Western-Art---Video-Installation-Art---Installation-Goes-the-Technical-Way!&id=3332777, 29/10/10. Cited 15-5-10
[35] Henri Matisse, "Black Is a Colour," Colour: Documents of Contemporary Art, ed. David Bachelor (London: Whitechapel and MIT Press, 2008) 100.

of years across vast space before it is visible to us. Gilchrist and Holland write in the catalogue essay for 'Shared Sky': "Constellations are sites for the poetic, the spiritual and the imaginative projections of the human condition" [36] Night is primal, the original dark space. In mythology it was often from darkness that life emerged.[37] The primal darkness of caves seems to have evoked mystical experiences for early man. The black charcoal paintings in these caves often depict the animals they hunted (Figure 19). It has been suggested that the overlapping images and patterns of the cave paintings resemble hallucinations provoked by the sensory deprivation of darkness.[38] These caves were probably sites for trance-induced visions and this art, inducing the multi-sensory, may be the earliest form of installation art.

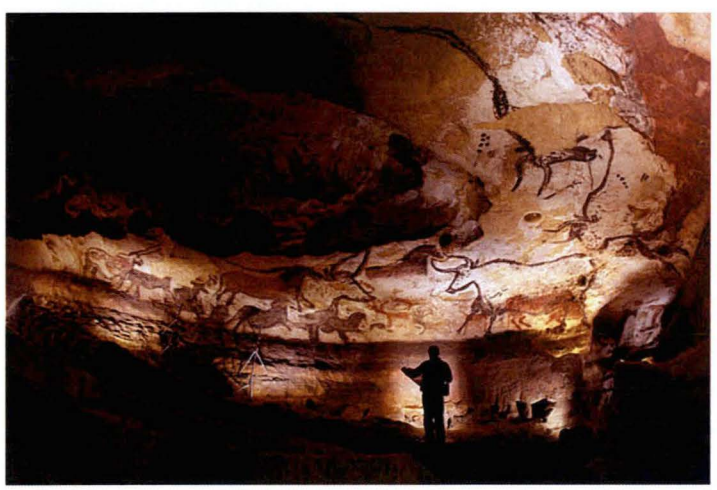

Figure 19.
Sisse Brimberg, *Lascaux Caves* (2007)
Photograph

The range of sense experiences – the sensorium - available to pre-historic people was very different to the range of sense experiences that are now possible for us. Our interpretation of experience is now also very different. While we still appreciate the mystical, we are also informed by a range of different understandings of the night sky and of our physiological experiences. For example, experiments have shown that sensory deprivation for even

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[36] National Gallery of Victoria, Shared Sky (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2009) 21.
[37] Michel Pastoureau, Black: The History of a Colour, trans. Jody Gladding (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008) 21.
[38] Peter Gaffney, The Force of the Virtual: Deleuze, Science and Philosophy (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010) 271.

relatively short periods of time, for 15 minutes, will induce visual hallucinations in normal people. Without external sense data, the mind generates its own patterns.[39] While we now have an understanding that these visions are hallucinatory, they nevertheless feel real and are physiological. In psychology, the practice of vision questing is still used as a means for accessing inner realities in order to affirm life choices and pathways.

James Turrell

Turrell's work, *Rodin Crater*, in the desert in Arizona (begun in 1970 and still being developed) is a sky observatory built in a volcanic crater that presents theatrical views of the sky (Figure 20). Viewers can watch the sky during the day or night. Like astronomical observatories, the site is remote from the light pollution of cities so the night sky is highly visible. This work frames and stages the night sky, using devices found in places of worship juxtaposed with strategies used in the construction of scientific observatories. Observation of the sky shifts here from a scientific to an inner experience. Like Goethe, Turrell is concerned with the subjective, phenomenal effects of light. The experience is designed to facilitate a sense of spiritual revelation, perhaps similar to that experienced by the people who used Stonehenge. Bachelard's notion of 'intimate immensity' is pertinent here.[40] The immensity inside us is made manifest by the immensity without.[41]

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[39] Hadley Legget, Out of LSD? Just 15 Minutes of Sensory Deprivation Triggers Hallucinations, 2009, Available: www.wired.com/wiredscience/2009/10/hallucinations. Cited 29-9-10

[40] Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1994) 184.

[41] Lynn Herbert, "Regarding Spirituality," Art: 21 Art in the Twenty-First Century, ed. Storr et al (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc, 2001) 76.

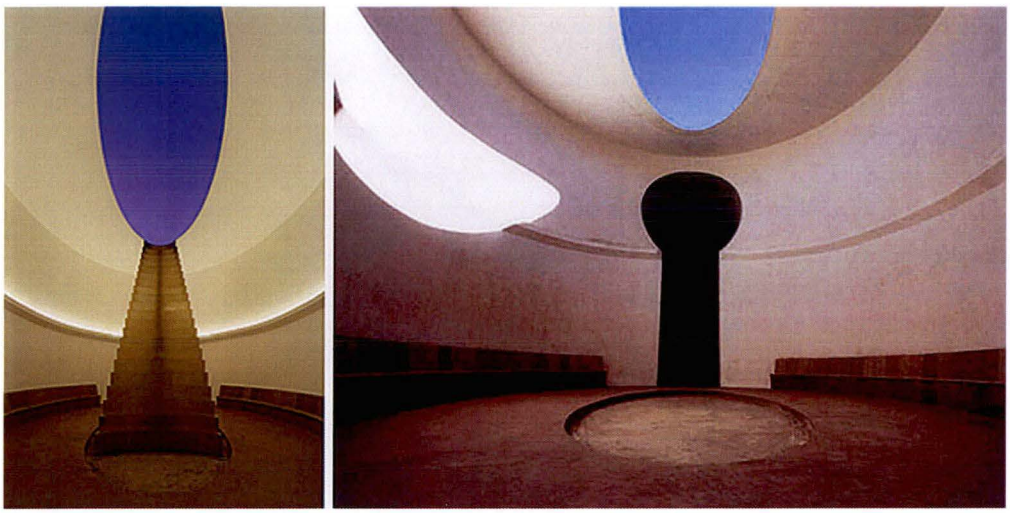

Figure 20.
James Turrell, *Rodin Crater*, (1970 and still under construction)

Rothko

Rothko was commissioned to paint 14 large paintings for a chapel (1964-7), a setting that invites a sense of the spiritual (Figure 21). The paintings are very dark, with black and purple tones shifting subtly across the surface. The depth of the blacks varies in texture and glossiness so that an encounter precipitates a slow and sensate interaction with the work. The large scale of the work creates fields of colour with subtle variations that reflect the physiological optical observations described by Goethe. Rothko wanted the viewer to feel a proximity to the painting: "...(t)he first experience is to be within the picture".[42] Rothko wanted to control the viewing conditions, so the paintings were hung low and physically surround the viewer. The experience of the painting is primary. He said; "I paint very large pictures...because I want to be very intimate and human. To paint a small picture is to place yourself outside your experience, to look upon an experience".[43] This is a significantly different viewpoint to that of regarding the sky from a remote distance. The works generate an existential dialogue between the viewer and work and people report that this is very moving.

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[42] Mark Rothko, "Mark Rothko: A Stage for Tragedy," Black Paintings, ed. Stephanie Rosenthal (Munich: Hatje Canz, 2007) 58.
[43] Rothko, "Mark Rothko: A Stage for Tragedy," 56.

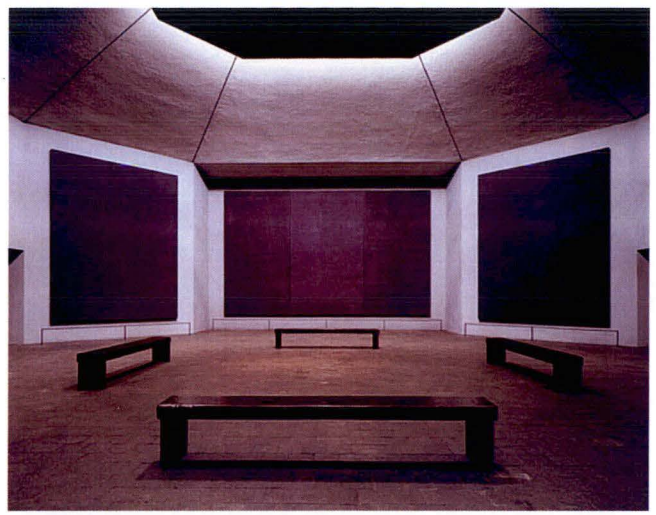

Figure 21.
Rothko Chapel paintings, (1964-7)
Oil on canvas, 14 panels

In the work of abstract expressionists such as Rothko, darkness threatens our psychological equilibrium. Not only should the viewer encounter the painting but they should also encounter themselves in the process. When the eye is denied information the focus of the viewer becomes directed toward inward states. Rothko worked with darkness to intensify the effect of his paintings. Rosenthal discusses his intent: "The darkening palette makes it appear that the artist was working his way down from a surface into ever deeper layers, rather like a sound that becomes a hum and continues resonating inside the body..." [44] This echoes Gossetti-Ferencei's notion that intensified visuality elicits bodily affects.

In order to darken the gallery space for the final installation of this project, I decided to paint panels that could be quickly installed and taken down. I varied the levels of darkness in different areas of the gallery with shades of very dark blue, green and also black paints, aiming to vary the intensity of darkness. This backdrop creates the setting for a viewer to experience a varied sense of darkness within the space.

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[44] Stephanie Rosenthal, Black Paintings (Munich: Hatje Cantz, 2007) 58.

Light in the Dark: Eliasson, Kusama and Pien

Work that operates in the dark must necessarily engage with light. My project has required consideration of the introduction of light into a darkened space in terms of how to achieve the effects that I seek. Work that has informed my thinking approaches the question of destabilizing the optical field by exploiting subjective bodily processes using light. The subject of this kind of work is the perceptual process itself. This work is staged to direct the viewer's focus towards their own contribution to the production of the image.

Olaffur Eliasson

Eliasson has worked extensively with light, creating immersive environments in which the viewer's senses are addressed. His piece, *Your Colour Memory* (2004) is comprised of a curved room in which no corners can be discerned, that is suffused with coloured light from an unseen source (Figure 22). As the light surrounds a viewer, and over time, their eyes tire and the colour appears to undulate. The colour of the light changes every few minutes and the effect of this is that the viewer experiences the opposing colour to the one they have just seen – this is the after-image effect that Goethe observed. When this colour changes the same thing happens again. The work draws the viewer's attention to subjective perceptual affects. Including 'Your...' in the title alerts the viewer to their own participation in the perception of the work.[45] A small dark room to the side of this space is one in which a viewer can experience their own individually generated visions – the kind produced by sensory deprivation. The viewer thus becomes aware of their part in creating the experience, rather than passively absorbing imagery surrounding them.

[45] Madeleine Grynsztejn, "Take Your Time: Olaffur Eliasson," Take Your Time: Olaffur Eliasson, ed. Madeleine Grynsztejn (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2007) 15.

Figure 22.
Olaffur Eliasson, *Your Colour Memory* (2004)
Light field installation

Eliasson's work is about seeing differently and attaining a full awareness of the act of perceiving in an embodied sense. Crary suggests that this work strategically challenges and displaces the "perceptual habits imposed by dominant features of contemporary technological culture."[46] My project also aims to disrupt habitual perceptual modes and I approach this by using UV light, which exists at the edge of the range of light waves visible to us.

Yayoi Kusama

Yayoi Kusama works with the decentred state, her installations mirroring the effects of her recurrent mental illness. The insistent hallucinatory quality of the work links to her perceptual territory. She talks about the spots which occur in many of her works, and in this one in the form of lights, as the visual objects that appear in her vision when she is unwell. On one level, Kusama's work can be seen as a way of affirming her specific reality.

Her work *Aftermath of Obliteration of Eternity* (2009) is a small dark room that is an infinity room – mirrors covering the walls reflect the elements of the installation receding forever, surrounding and including the viewer (Figure 23).

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[46] Jonathan Crary, "Your Colour Memory: Illuminations of the Unforeseen," Olafur Eliasson: Minding the World. Exhibition Catalogue, ed. Olafur Eliasson & Gitte Orskou (Aarhus: Aarhus Kunstmuseum, 2004) 218.

The room is dark and small glowing lights are installed, reflecting into infinity. The viewer is located on a platform and surrounded by water. This sets up an experiential encounter with both an environment and oneself. It seems to represent the end of matter, as nothingness recedes into space infinitely. It seems to suggest both the effect of gazing into the night sky, which also recedes into infinity, and alternately the vast cityscapes of our time.

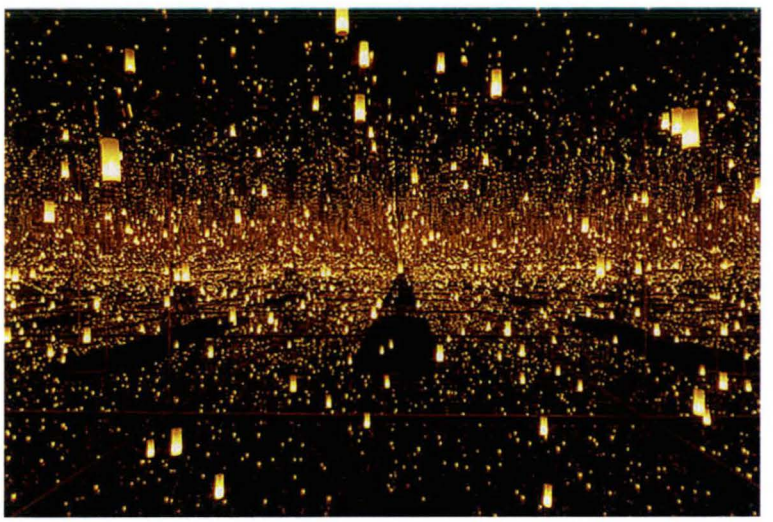

Figure 23.
Yayoi Kusama, *Aftermath of Eternity* (2009)
Light and mirror installation

The work takes on meaning in terms of its manifestation in the viewer as an inner experience. The press release states that Kusama engages with a "preoccupation with mortality, as well as with enlightenment, solitude, nothingness, and the mysteries of the physical and metaphysical universe." [47] The work suggests to me the bleakness of the technological sublime and the prospect of our own self-destruction. Similarly, David Stephenson's work on brightly lit cities at night both seduces and induces a kind of appalled recognition at the scope of our conquest of the environment, in this case, the night (Figure 8, ch. 1). In terms of content then, Kusama's work aligns with my project. It presents an experience that contemplates the contemporary sensorium and the existential angst associated with that. Like my own work, it is also an analogue installation.

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[47] Gagosian Gallery, Press Release: Yayoi Kusama, 2009, Gagosian Gallery, Available: www.gagosian.com/exhibitions/2009-04-16_yayoi-kusama/, 3/11/10. Cited 3-11-10

Ed Pien

Ed Pien's installation work, *Tracing Night (*2004), is a labyrinthine figure of eight structure that a viewer enters to encounter drawings of creatures of the night, spectres of our imagination (Figure 24). Like Kusama, he uses analogue strategies and deals with inner worlds, but rather than placing objects in installation he creates large drawn works. Lighting is important: the gallery setting for this work is dark and the lighting is predominantly deep blue, a colour associated with the night sky. This work suggests the otherworldly. The heart of the work is lit differently with red light luring the viewer inwards. Darkness in this work is a setting that establishes a context of associations with the unconscious. Pien challenges the viewer to move out of an everyday way of being to face the fear of the unknown by disturbing the surface of the known. He confronts us with the realm of hauntology - the lurking, manifesting hidden aspects of our minds.[48] He asks how we relate to ourselves, suggesting that we are strangers to ourselves. Like Redon, he makes manifest invisible inner worlds, taking the viewer into the realm of the unconscious. In contrast to Redon, Pien also approaches the embodied by setting up his drawing as an immersive structure.

Figure 24.
Ed Pien, *Tracing Night*, (2004)
Drawing on glassine paper

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[48] Laiwan, Ed Pien: Drawing Hauntology, 2007, Available: http://www.canadianart.ca/art/features/2007/06/01/ed_pien/. Cited 4-10-10

Laiwan says of the creatures in this work; "It is ironic how embodied and present they are— within their ethereality—in contrast to our increasing bodily and material obsolescence and sedation as mortals within virtuality and simulacra." [49] The strange drawn creatures invite the viewer to befriend the wild and free aspects of themselves. In this way the work is about locating resistance in the embodied. Again, the senses are invoked to promote alternatives to the rational optic world.

Pien's labyrinthine structure strikes me as particularly effective in evoking the irrational working of the mind and this relates to the gallery configuration that I have designed.

Print and Installation: Hofshi and Steir

The analogue print is sometimes deployed with an emphasis on the haptic in order to emphasize and value its differences from the digital print. [50] The physical qualities of the printed surfaces contrast with flatter digital images. Consideration of the surface of the print is one of the factors I assess in working towards foregrounding the sensory, but it is not the only one. Closely related to the surface of the print is the choice of printing substrate. I have chosen different substrates depending on the intent of each work. In some cases I deploy a surface which enhances the haptic and embodied aspect of viewing, while in other works I use surfaces which move away from this in order to draw attention to the loss of embodiment. I discuss the choices of mediums of the next artists in relation to their subject matter.

Orit Hofshi

Orit Hofshi is an Israeli figurative woodcut artist who works on a large scale. The work, *If the Tread is an Echo* (2009), consists of both woodblock prints

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[49] Laiwan, Ed Pien: Drawing Hauntology.
[50] Ruth Pelzer-Montada, The Attraction of the Print: Notes on the Surface of the (Art) Print, 2009, Printeresting Website, Available: http://www.printeresting.org/2009/09/15/the-attraction-of-print-notes-on-the-surface-of-the-art-print/#more-7426. Cited 14-9-09

and the woodblocks themselves assembled to build a larger picture (Figure 25). The woodcut emphasizes bodily engagement with the imagery as the artist physically laboured to carve the work. The imagery is of a landscape with a solitary figure wandering upstream, looking towards the disappearing horizon. In the foreground are fragments of the urban encroaching into the landscape.

Figure 25.
Orit Hofshi, *If the Tread is an Echo* (2009)
Woodcut prints and blocks, overall: 136"height x 287"width x 36"deep

A small dark room, which is an enclosed area that the viewer can enter, has been constructed adjacent to the print (Figure 26). It is constructed from more of the woodblocks from which the prints were taken, thus echoing the imagery. A backlit print is installed above the enclosed area so that when inside here a viewer can look directly up at it. It is difficult to read from the documented image but logically I imagine it to be of the water in which the viewer would be standing in that part of the image. The viewer is thus immersed.

Figure 26.
Orit Hofshi, *If the Tread is an Echo* (detail), (2009)

Hofshi describes her work as 'operatic', functioning on a grand scale and evoking the cinematic. Narratives unfold as a viewer reads the work in moving across sections of it. She says: "My frequent depiction of isolated figures refers primarily to the notion people need to face challenges, as well as the consequences of their actions and decisions as individuals." [51]

She asks the viewer to consider human involvement in the environment, and the trace of our actions. She invites movement from afar, up close, along, around, into and under the work and so asks a viewer to consider multiple perspectives. These can only be established by the movement of the viewer, preventing the work from being experienced in its entirety from any position. This work invites reflection on reality and on the viewer's relationship to the environment. The small dark enclosure is an innovative way to set up a mini installation that alters viewing conditions and foregrounds an embodied mode of seeing in relation to the environment.

Hofshi creates deliberate woodcut marks that render a combination of her conceptual and sensory engagement with the subject matter. In considering how to deploy the print, I chose to move away from figurative work to explore looser ways to make marks. Mark making is fundamental to printmaking.

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[51] Jose Roca, Interview: Orit Hofshi, 2009, Philagrafika blogspot, Available: http://philagrafika.blogspot.com/2009/03/interview-orit-hofshi.html, 25th October 2010. Cited 25-10-10

Marks are the building blocks of imagery and convey a sense of the maker's energetic engagement with the image. I chose to use specific marks as one of my strategies for conveying internal aspects of the phenomenological. As mentioned in chapter one, Crowther writes about 'phenomenal depth' in artwork in ways that are useful to my own formulation of a contextual field. Phenomenal depth is intrinsic to art – art intuitively illuminates the embodied condition, as it is created within the conditions inherent to our existence. Mark making thus has a phenomenal aspect to it. The way that marks are rendered conveys energy in an image that points to a particular reading of it.

When Krauss charts the occurrence of work that subverts the optical she cites the work of Jackson Pollock, whose large gestural paintings emblematised the abstract expressionist movement. His mark making methodology employed instinctive movement, thus enabling the operation of the unconscious. Sight is not used to differentiate marks; Pollock allows them to generate the chaos of unrepressed affect. Marks, like Pollock's, that are made without reference to visual control and choices convey the bodily and the unconscious.

Pat Steir

Steir has similarly approached mark making in two-dimensional images in loose, process-driven ways. She utilises the fluid nature of materials to evoke the watery processes of nature (Figure 27). The marks suggest how aspects of the environment – darkness, splashes of light and shadowy forms - might be experienced rather than how they might look. Steir's work is not representational, rather it is experiential, evoking an inner response to the world. The link between the physical and the metaphysical becomes evident in these works.

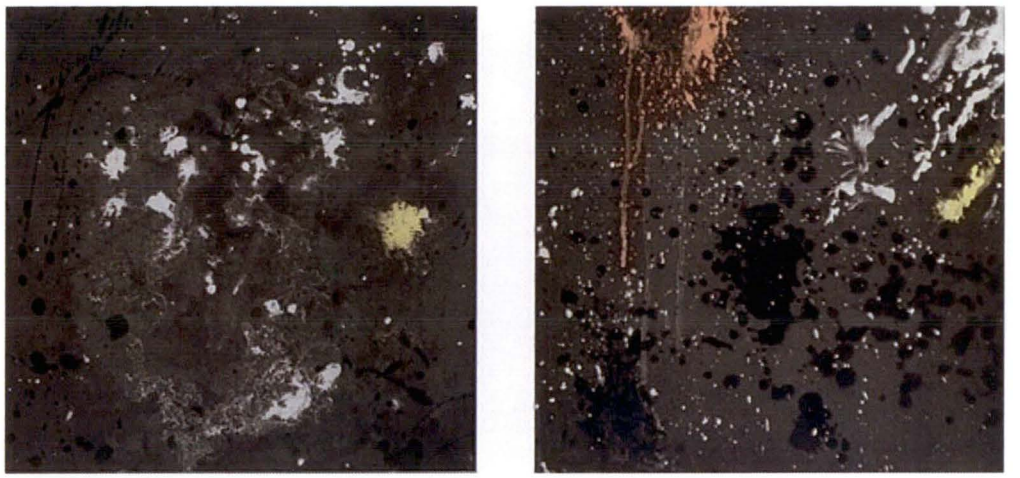

Figure 27.
Pat Steir, Starry Night: July and August (1996)
Soap ground and spit bite etching, 18 x 18 1/4" and 19 3/4 x 18"

The loose mark making does however, leave meaning elusive and this generates challenges in terms of content in the work. Steir addresses this by careful titling to indicate content. While Crowther argues that context is not necessary for a phenomenal appreciation of abstract art, I do not find this convincing. I developed a form of mark making to record moments that signify experience and the traces of engagement with organic natural forms, but this in itself did not convey enough of the content of the project. In considering how to extend the phenomenal effect of print beyond mark making, I looked at several strategies. Having worked with large-scale prints previously, a logical step was to consider making wall-scaled work. This is often a strategy explored by printmakers, like Hofshi, interested in extending the phenomenal effects possible with print and it is a process that print can easily accommodate by tiling up repeated forms. This kind of work invites a viewer to move toward, away from and along the work in order to apprehend it fully. It operates at human or larger than human scale and can be read at a distance or intimately. A more visceral response can be elicited in this way. Steir's painting, *Silence* (2004), achieves this because of the scale of the work (Figure 28). Titling in this piece is again suggestive, but this time of other sensory effects. The roar of the waterfall in this image is immediately conjured in the mind as the title draws attention to the absence of noise.

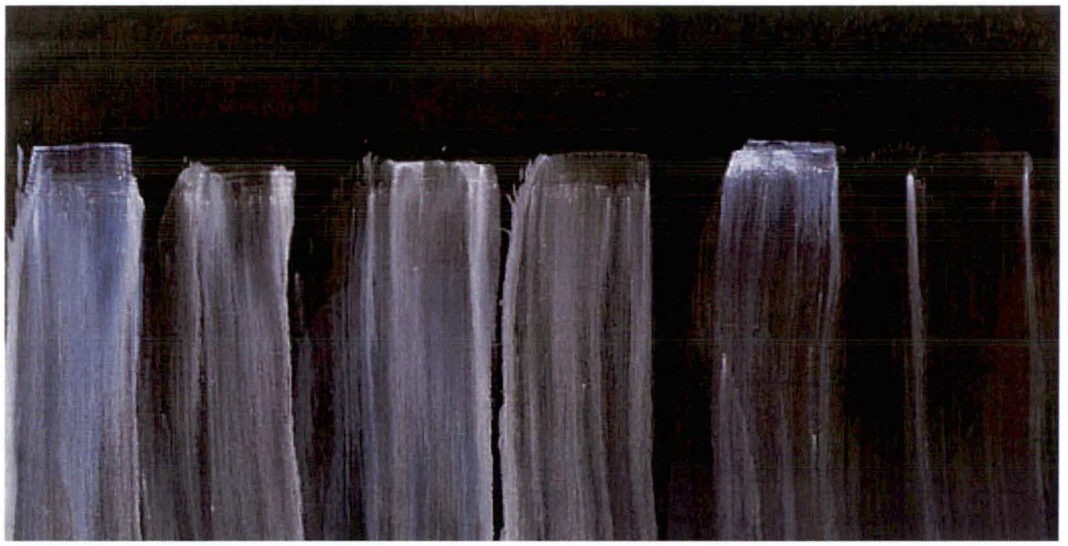

Figure 28.
Pat Steir, *Silence,* (2004)
Oil on canvas, 77 3/4 x 151 1/4"

The relation of the art object to the three-dimensional frame of the room can be extended further. In a recent work, *The Nearly Endless Line* (2010), Steir makes the relationship of the viewer with the space apparent. A line painted on the gallery walls draws the viewer into a darkened space lit by UV light. At no point can a viewer see the whole line but neither can they escape it as it unfurls and unravels in space (Figure 29).

Figure 29.
Pat Steir, *The Nearly Endless Line*, (2010)
Paint and UV light installation

The line seems unmoored, hovering in space, drawing the viewer in. The viewer moves inside the painting and so the separation between the observer and the observed dissolves.[52] This is underscored by the use of UV light which foils depth perception - where the line sits in space seems uncertain. I use UV lighting in my own work because of the way that it confuses our perception of space. This light wavelength sits at the edge of our perceptual capacity.

From two to three-dimensional space: Bitters and Silveira

Crowther discuses ways that an image can be staged: Two-dimensional works immobilise an image in space and time and figure/ground relationships are clarified, which intensifies our focus on the image presented. In this way, he argues, two-dimensional pictures present images that are separated from normal viewing conditions, enabling the viewer to consider the world free from everyday embodiment and expectations. Framing devices as simple as the edges of the rectangular frame reinforce this separation.[53] The separation from the everyday also presents an opportunity for an artist to engage a viewer in perceptual and metaphysical questioning. However, also three-dimensional works within a gallery engage a viewer in propositions outside the everyday. Steir's work is an example.

While many printmakers explore printing three-dimensional objects, I am discussing three-dimensions in terms of an installation space. Wandering facilitates the piecing together of fragments and parallels walking in the dark. The work hinges on the movement of the viewer in time and space – the viewer is in effect the centre of the work. Crowther discusses how three-dimensional work sets up quite different phenomenological experiences for viewers. The work has a physical presence that is real, not virtual. It has real

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[52] Sharon Butler, "Pat Steir: The Nearly Endless Line," (2010), http://www.brooklynrail.org/2010/12/artseen/pat-steir-the-nearly-endless-line. Cited 28-12-10

[53] Crowther, *Phenomenology of the Visual Arts (Even the Frame)*. p. 53

depth rather than the virtual depth of two-dimensional work.[54] Within an installation a viewer is part of the physical space of the work, creating meaning through relationship with the work. The bodily orientation of the viewer in relation to the work means that it cannot be apprehended at once, in one glance. It can only be discovered through moving around and past and through.

Morris suggests that when perceiving an object one feels separate to the object; whereas, when perceiving architectural space, one feels coexistent with what is perceived. Either one surrounds or is surrounded. [55] The work *Dislocation 3* makes this clear (Figure 30).

Shawn Bitters

Bitters is an American artist who has developed several works that engage with the space in which they are installed. *Dislocation 3* (2010) in effect creates a darkened space foregrounding bodily interaction with the environment (Figure 30). As a viewer walks around and through the space the gallery is viewed from within the printed pillars and alternately the pillars are viewed from within the gallery space. The viewer can move from being surrounded to surveying from the outside, although the whole can never be seen in one glance. This shifting of perspectives in this work relates to my consideration of the movement through print installations. At the very centre of the work is a black shadow on the floor, a conglomerate of oblique shadows of a person, the shadows that might fall behind a viewer from several viewing positions inside the work.

[54] Crowther, Phenomenology of the Visual Arts (Even the Frame). p.84
[55] Morris, "The Present Tense of Space," 182.

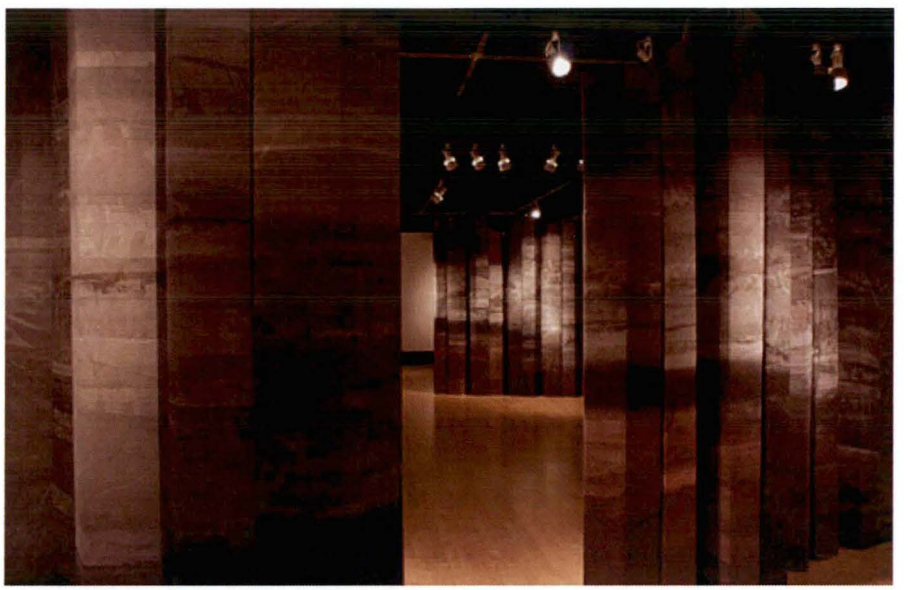

Figure 30.
Shawn Bitters, *Dislocation 3* (2010)
Screen print on paper, installation assemblage

The detail of the printed marks invites viewers to also look closely and intimately at the work. The printed marks are abstracted from rock surfaces and the dark column forms are based on geological formations. Although it is not readily apparent in the documentation, Bitters states that his work operates by generating an illusion that the abstracted forms blend with the darkened gallery space because the colours echo the colours of the gallery itself. He designs the work for visceral impact, intending to prompt in a viewer a greater awareness of their engagement with the environment. The darkness of the work creates conditions in which the apprehension of the columns may be felt on a bodily level. He deals with the idea that one's environment shapes one's mind, and is working with the memory of the particular landscape that he grew up with. Bitters says of the *Dislocation* series of works that they map his sense of disorientation. In this work then, connection to the environment is ruptured and is viewed through the lens of memory. Although this is a different lens to my own, through which I consider relationship to the environment in the present, I evoke the idea that the disappearing environment may become a memory.

Rock Fall 3, German (2007) continues this investigation of the landscape in a more intimate way. Drawn and repeated marks describe Bitters' impressions

of a specific area of rock and evoke the tactile (Figure 31). The cutting out and assembling of these prints creates a sense of density of form, which strengthens the idea of haptic engagement with natural forms. This work has parallels with my approach to cutting and assembling prints.

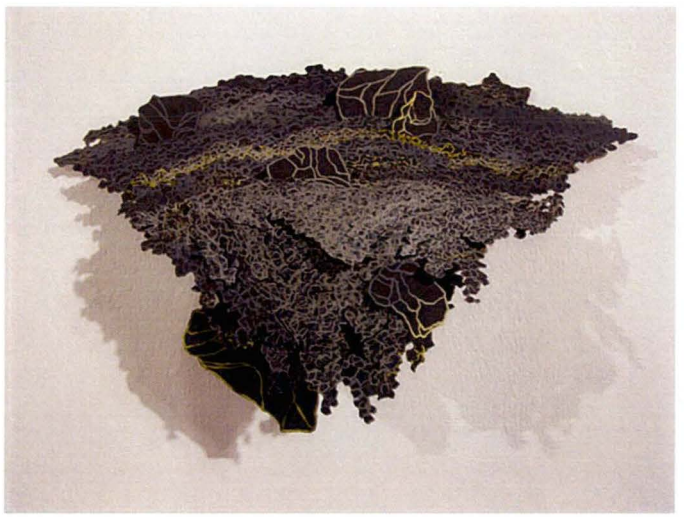

Figure 31.
Shawn Bitters, *Rock Fall 3, German* (2007)
Screen print on paper, cut and assembled, 7"x 12"x6"

Two-dimensional surfaces are re-configured in three-dimensions and this kind of assemblage has depth and multiple viewing points as a viewer moves around the work.

Fragmentation: Fernandez and Siegel

Another idea that Morris discusses which is of relevance to this project is the 'gestalt': the perception that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts – the mind will tend to read whole forms rather than parts. The recognition of form is only possible when there is enough information immediately in the visual field to read the whole. This 'all at once' vision is the opposite of spatial experience, in which the whole must be discovered in time and by moving through the space.[56] The all-at-onceness of vision seems to me to link with the ocular-centric mode of seeing. The tendency of the mind to leap to a gestalt reading can be subverted through foiling recognition. Like the following artists, I use several strategies to achieve this, finding ways to present

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[56] Morris, "The Present Tense of Space," 197.

fragments that cannot be immediately understood. Not all fragments are available to the eye at once and understanding the spatial configuration unfolds in time through experience thus enlisting an embodied mode of seeing.

Fragments of my prints form the basis of cut out and assembled clusters that rely on spatial arrangements and lighting to generate embodied affects. A significant possibility when using print is that of repeating forms and imagery. This creates the possibility to explore the density of experience referred to earlier in Merleau-Ponty's writing. I cluster and disperse prints with repeating forms to produce the oscillation of affirmation/anxiety described by Gosetti-Ferencei. The effect is one of defamiliarisation, a sense that we are alienated from the natural world.

Fernandez

Sculptor Teresita Fernandez deals with ideas of perception, placing at centre stage the process of viewing work so that the viewer experiences this directly, and drawing on the natural environment as the basis for her installations. Her work implies that we are embedded in the natural world. *Portrait (Blind Landscape)* (2008) combines several strategies that engage the viewer in a more embodied response. The form is suggestive of the organic world and is fragmented with repeated layers that create depth and density. The back of the work is painted green and this generates a green glow on the wall behind. The surface is reflective, so that the building in which it is installed becomes embedded in the reading of the work, shifting as the viewer moves past. Simultaneously both the viewer and the layers appear and disappear as the viewer moves along the work. Meaning is generated through engagement over time while experiencing the elements of the work (Figure 32).

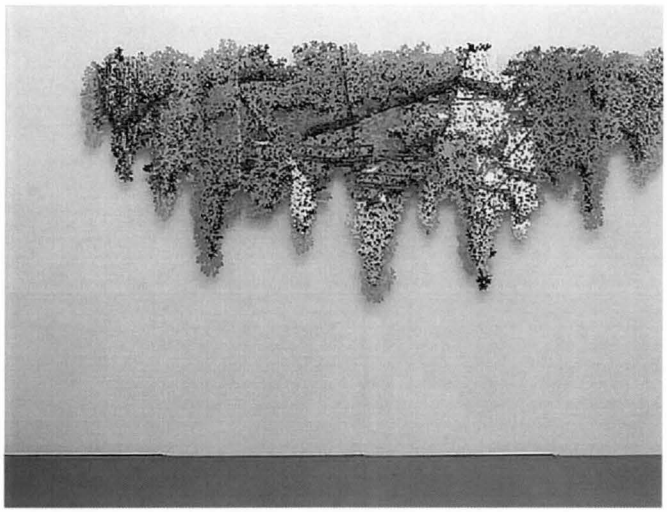

Figure 32.
Teresita Fernandez, *Portrait (Blind Landscape)* (2008)
Precision cut stainless steel and enamel, 56.5 x 136 x 4.25 inches

Blind Blue Landscape (2009) is a site-specific installation of small, mirrored glass cubes mounted along a dark and undulating 21 m wall (Figure 33). Each cube reflects both the landscape outside and the viewer moving through the space. The multiple viewpoints explicitly reflect the perceptive process back to the viewer and activate the play of light against dark. The larger form of the mass of cubes is organic and fluid, suggesting water falling down the wall, like raindrops rolling down the window opposite. In this work then the undulation of the wall interrupts and varies the viewing distance as the viewer moves past the work.

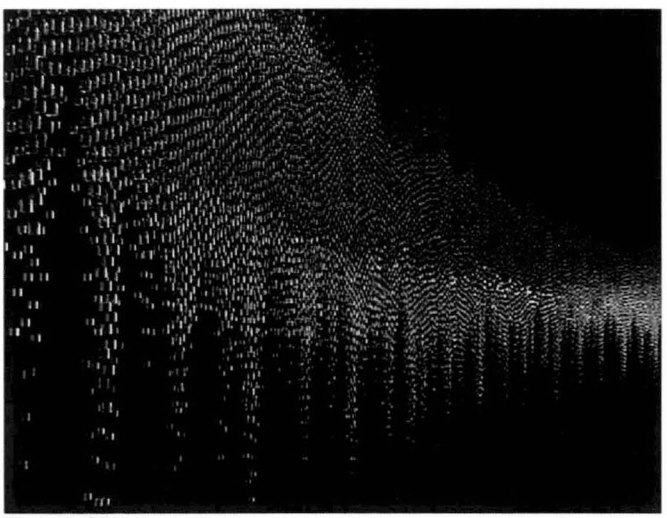

Figure 33.
Terestia Fernandez, *Blind Blue Landscape* (2009)
Mirrored acrylic cubes, 300 x 2100 cm

Fernandez' use of fragmented elements, dark reflective surfaces and construction of a larger pattern out of smaller elements are strategies that I also exploit in my work.

The work suggests the expansiveness of outer space, evoking Bachelard's notion of 'intimate immensity'. Bachelard suggests that there is a strong connection between "the immensity of world space and the depth of 'inner space'".[57] "...by changing space, by leaving the space of one's usual sensibilities, one enters into communication with a space that is psychically innovating."[58] Here then is the idea that we can be sensitised to the world differently. Fernandez avoids the pictorial strategy of staging a single perspective viewing of the work; instead, with this wall scale work, the movement of the viewer makes multiple viewing positions possible, encouraging self-reflective perception. Reflections are also apparent in the mirrored surfaces so the viewers watch themselves watching. Her work deals with ideas of external vision; whereas my interest is more in ways that internal vision is activated. The reflective surfaces of Fernandez' works generate an awareness of what Merleau-Ponty terms the 'specular I' which is a consciousness of an external viewpoint of the self. My interest lies in the 'introceptive me', the inner sense of self.[59]

Fran Siegel

Siegel combines drawing with installation work, exploring the realm between physical and perceptual space. Cut-out forms are assembled in suspension on fine thread, articulating a sense of fluctuating mutability (Figure 34). The forms are covered in drawn marks that are based on observations of phenomena such as atmospheric conditions and geographical perspectives in contrast with urban geometry. The drawing material, graphite, plays with light changes on the surfaces as the forms move. The relationship of these layers

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[57] Bachelard, The Poetics of Space 206.
[58] Bachelard, The Poetics of Space 206.
[59] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The Primacy of Perception and Its Philosophical Consequences," The Primacy of Perception, ed. Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Evanston, Illinois: North Western University Press, 1964).

of elements and surfaces shift in relation to each other as the viewer moves past. This generates a sense of instability in the viewer, as nothing is fixed or given, all is contingent on viewpoints and both the movement of the viewer and the movements of air contribute to the creation of the particular viewing experience.

Figure 34.
Fran Siegel, *Overland 5* (2008)
Graphite, paint and colored pencil on cut paper, Duralar and string. Two layers suspended from and illuminated by skylight, 14' x 25' x 6'

Shifts in perspective and light move the focus from the fragmentary and abstracted material forms to the experiential aspects of the work.[60] The collision of natural and architectural forms is exploited in the site-specific creation of some of her work. Her process brings multiple viewpoints together to create works that express displacement, "reflecting the rootless experience of life in the contemporary urban landscape."[61]

The installations require the engagement of the viewer over time from multiple perspectives, inviting close reading of the detail in the pieces. *Overland 5* (2008) moves in response to the disturbance of air currents, including the movement of the viewer. It is a work that is based on views of the aerial descent to the city from an aeroplane, the movement of the work suggesting the instability of our relationship to place.

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[60] Siegel, Fran. "Artist's Statement." http://www.calfund.org/artistgallery/2010/artist_fran_siegel.php#../images/2010/fran_siegel/siegel_01_med.jpg. Cited 29-10-10
[61] Ibid.

This installation is lit only by natural light from the ceiling and the facets of paper perpendicular to the light shift as the installation moves. The dark forms in the work shadow and heighten the operation of the lighter areas. It is a kind of twilight zone, generating a sense of displacement.

Regina Silveira

Brazilian artist Regina Silveira works with immersive space and approaches the tactile from a different angle. The work *Mundus Admirabilis* (2007) was installed in the 2010 show, 'The Graphic Unconscious', in Philadelphia (Figure 35). Printed on vinyl stickers, the oversized black insects, which are versions of illustrative engravings, some imaginary, overtake the building, covering floors, walls and ceiling. Silveira goes beyond the wall to cover all the internal surfaces of the room. The viewer is surrounded and cannot escape the insects, forced to touch them when walking over them, and forced to feel them by their insistent and iterating presence. I think that the repetition generates the build up of a residual memory – I am thinking of when I picked raspberries as a teenager as a school holiday job and at night afterwards I would see raspberry images floating across an internal screen of vision.

Figure 35.
Regina Silveira, *Mundus Admirabilis* (2007)
Adhesive vinyl, dimensions variable

Architectural space is over-run with imagery that manifests an alternate reality - that we are overtaken by our imaginary fears, by chimera. The proliferation

of insects creates visual noise, interrupting the harmony and logic of the building. The architectural thus becomes the ontological. The primitive animal overtakes the institutionalization and repression of the body.[62]

Taxonomy in this work has gone awry. The proliferation of repeated forms of huge crawling bugs evokes the plague - a dark menacing mass. Silveira conveys a sense of the tactile by using imagery that generates discomfort. The insects play with our fear of pestilence, mirroring the way that we fear aspects of the environment. As in Redon's work, fears loom large in our psyches and are correspondingly depicted large in pictorial form. Silveira's concept draws on the notion that 'civilisation' faces a future that seems increasingly unworkable; we face threats of plague proportions on social, environmental and cultural fronts.[63] The installation has a hallucinatory quality and the bugs suggest the dark colonizing aspect of our own psyche and behaviours. There is a sense of flatness in these images, reminding me of the urge we have to squash any disagreeable insects that intrude into our consciousness.

Silveira transforms the space with a visual intervention that interrupts the intended architectural harmony and posits a visual intervention that is in a sense objective vision taken to excess thus rendering the sensate through the breakdown of reason. The darkness of the images is metaphorical, a manifestation of nightmare. This work leaves room for a range of responses – wonder, fascination, repulsion and it also has a playful aspect. Silveira deploys the lack of empathy we have for the entymological aspect of the environment to generate a visceral response as a way of commenting on the sense that our culture has gone awry.

This work also invades the body - *Mundus Admirabilis* also incorporates a table spread with insect printed crockery (Figure 36). Yi-Fu Tuan writes that:

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[62] Stephane Huchet, Explosive Fix, 2007, Available: http://reginasilveira.uol.com.br/mundusadmirabilis.php#, 26th October 2010. Cited 25-10-10

[63] Regina Silveira, Mundus Admirabilis, 2007, Available: http://reginasilveira.uol.com.br/mundusadmirabilis.php#. Cited 25-10-10

"the mind frequently extrapolates beyond sensory evidence."[64] Similarly, the body responds through extrapolation from the visual. A sense of disgust is brought to the fore as one imagines ingesting the insects. Silveira's crockery foils any sense of separation, evoking a visceral response, which invades the body.

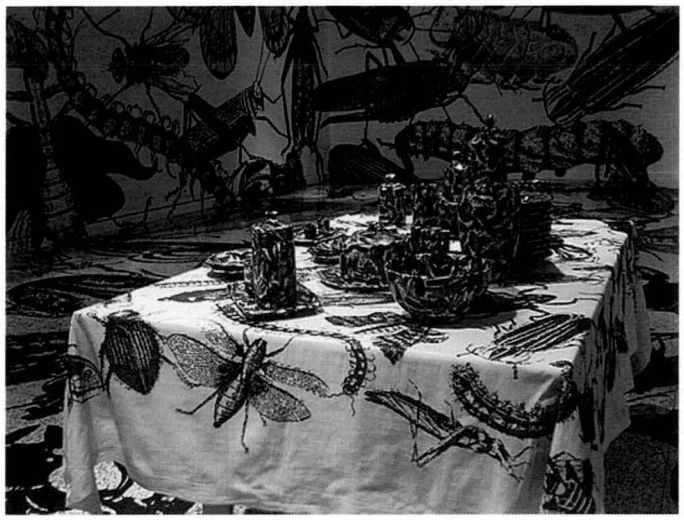

Figure 36.
Regina Silveira, Mundus Arabillis (2007)
Installation, adhesive vinyl and printed crockery

This work is relevant to my project as it approaches darkness, the haptic and relationship to the environment via the repetition of print. One of my works draws on the instinctive attraction of moths to light, in particular UV light.

Conclusion

The context for this project is located in discourse dealing with modes of vision, particularly where this concerns ways that the embodied is deployed as a means of subverting the optic. The embodied nature of vision implies subjective experience and this is the key to re-activating a viewer's relationship to the environment in darkness. I have considered the ways that artists deal with perceptual questions in relation to darkness, both physically and metaphorically. The intersection of the themes of darkness, embodied perception and relationship to the environment are evident in the installation works I have discussed. Works that insist on an immediate sensory response

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[64] Yi_Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977) 16.

point towards awareness of the perceptual, reinforcing the idea that embodied experience enhances our sensitivity to the environment, in these examples, the natural environment.

The experience of vast space is frequently an experience of the night and this is felt on a bodily level as much as more intimate encounters with darkness. The shift from two to three dimensions in my work has been a significant strategy for activating an embodied mode of vision and so a close reading of how spatial effects are activated in artworks has been central. I have discussed works that deal with darkness in terms of the subjective experience of light, which is an aspect of my own work. The fundamentals of printmaking practices are mark making and choices of substrates so I have included discussion of several approaches to mark making and use of materials in terms of the phenomenal. Similarly, printmaking invites the use of repeated and fragmented imagery and in combination with considered assemblage this can be a means of generating heightened affects, so works that use these strategies have been important. Finally, the peripatetic mode of viewing is another central strategy in my work for foiling the apprehension of all at once vision, and so keeping the viewer in an embodied mode.

The discussion of artworks focuses then on strategies that activate an embodied mode of viewing which becomes primary in darkness. However, despite the nostalgic aspect of the idea of returning to the senses, the works manifest a sense of alienation from the bodily and the environment. The works articulate and mirror the cultural feeling of dislocation from the physical world. As in my own work, the experience of the natural world generates both wonder and anxiety.

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction: Overview of methodology and process

As outlined in chapter one, early in the project I decided to base my investigations on phenomenological methodology. There are numerous debates and variations on what exactly this means.[1] It is the basis of research methods in a range of disciplines. Essentially it is a methodology that begins by paying attention only to what is actually experienced without interpreting or analysing what happens. The aim is to avoid simply finding what you are looking for. When you allow your mind to open to new possibilities then new ways of seeing become possible. Often this is recorded in written form, but for this project I needed to find more visual means of recording what I experienced.[2] I developed my own form of phenomenological methodology in order to generate information that I could apply to my project. I was curious about how I experienced the loss of sight in the dark and about how I experienced other senses and this led to development of methods for recording the tactile in visual form. The process was focussed on internal experience as much as on the external.

In the early stages I allowed experimentation to direct the project. The figurative work that I made early on did not satisfy the questions I had for the project, so I decided to work towards generating more visceral and gestural marks. The visual recording of my experience provided ideas for the kind of imagery that aligned with the intent of the project. I worked through the print process, discovering what was possible and then used the prints I had made to create print installations that dealt with the ideas underpinning the work. I wanted the prints to be very physical, to assert the primacy of perception, to

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[1] Linda Finlay, "Debating Phenomenological Research Methods," Phenomenology and Practice 3.1 (2009).
[2] Beekman Barritt, Bleeker and Mulderij, "Phenomenology Online Inquiry," Phenomenology and Pedagogy 2.1 (2002).

remind people that experience can be far richer than the virtual world that we are surrounded by. Important questions during the project concerned how I used the installation space and why. Since I began the project with a background in large scale but two-dimensional print practices, the transition to three-dimensions was significant. In phenomenological terms the installation of large-scale prints in three-dimensional space represents an experiential shift for the viewer and an expansion in potential sensory effects.

The project had three distinct phases: Firstly, I spent time physically being in the night at the urban edge, walking in the bush and on the streets, exploring how it felt and what I saw and reflecting on these perceptions. I developed ways to record this – in writing, mark making and by taking photos, and experimented with rendering this in print form. I conducted early experiments in image development both out in the field and in the studio. This involved finding ways to allow more random elements to operate in the imagery. I made a decision to pursue gestural mark making as the most appropriate means of rendering what I felt because it linked with the bodily. This early part of the project produced a range of practical investigations that explored processes focussed on developing the visual language for the project, seeking marks and imagery that reflected the experiential. Secondly, I grappled with what I had experienced, the marks I had created and the reading I had engaged with, endeavouring to focus my work conceptually. This was a difficult period which involved moving from the printed form with which I was familiar to experimenting with hybrid ways of working – cutting out prints and assembling them to embed other elements and meanings that emphasised the sensory, and considering how to activate the space around the work. During this period I was also experimenting with using UV light as a way of lighting darkness to illuminate the work without losing darkness. Finding dark spaces in which to trial my work was an ongoing difficulty throughout the project. Finally, the last phase involved making the resolved works. All of the elements that I had been exploring then came together in six different print assemblages that addressed the concepts driving the project.

I will outline the phases of the process I went through, briefly mentioning early work, and then discuss more fully the final works in which the project is realised. I begin discussion of each work with a description of the work in conjunction with an image, a statement of the experiential intentions and the methodology that I worked with, and finally an evaluation of how I consider the work operates.

Phases of research

Phase One: Early Investigations

This first phase of the research involved a sustained period of engagement with the night, paying attention to how it felt and how I experienced it. I walked and let the environment into me, drawing it in, allowing it to make its impression, to seep into me. This helped clarify what my own particular experiences of the bush were: Some spaces felt easy to walk in and others dense and impenetrably fraught. It felt different sitting still in the dark to walking in the dark. Greater moonlight rendered the environment easier to see and facilitated a more enjoyable experience whereas dark nights that were windy and wet were difficult to navigate. My greatest fear was of meeting another person but in reality all I encountered were my own imagined projections.

The first set of prints developed from noticing the way that sounds and movements in the dark triggered these imagined explanations that had weak links with probable realities. At this stage I was reading Marina Warner and wondering if an exploration of myth would be a useful way to focus the work. There are often large black ravens in the area I walk through, and in myth these are potent symbols of darkness and the workings of the unconscious. I witnessed the death of a raven on some power lines suggesting the shadow world with which darkness is associated. This series of prints explored the notion of the chimera, a mythic creature that really only exists in the imagination but which evokes this sense of 'something out there' in the dark.

The *Chimera* prints (2006) present fragments of bird, suggesting flight and absence, the chimera that is imagined but never really seen (Figure 37).

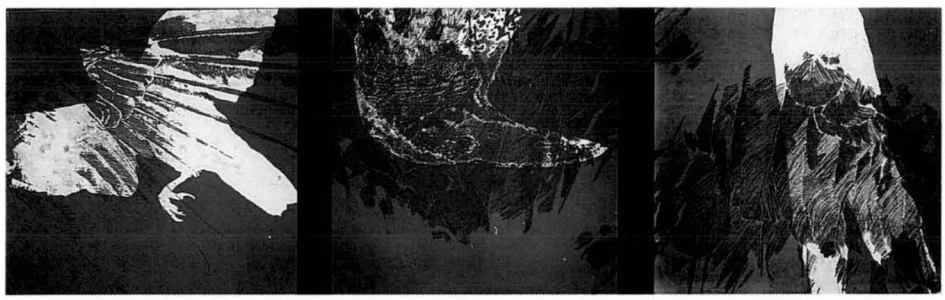

Figure 37.
Iona Johnson, *Chimera I, II & III* (2006)
Etching and linocuts, 400 x 400 mm each

In evaluating this work, however, I decided that myth and symbolism were not useful directions for the project. I was keen to avoid the well-worn tropes associated with night, and so moving away from symbolism to more direct experiences of darkness seemed a more fruitful direction. Merleau-Ponty's writing suggested a more primal awareness of the world, one that exists without symbols but rather with elemental forms. Our engagement with the world operates through a sensing awareness, more crudely expressed with touch but operating on a more subtle level as a sensing of air movement, for example, the facial vision that blind people consciously use to navigate the world.[3] The skin is the locus for this, but also inner senses like proprioception – how we are aware of our body positions in relation to objects around us in space.

The next set of prints, *Flickering* (2007), work with the idea of the flickering of light and dark through trees and foliage and in the print the tonal shifts between light and dark are reduced, suggesting the reduced visibility of the dark (Figure 38). The image is heavily embossed to emphasise the physicality of experience. I made the white figures by physically making body impressions directly onto plates with sugar lift so they are life-size and actually are literally a projection of myself. The flickering white figure suggests the ghostly apparition, the person that I dreaded meeting out there. It is 360cm

[3] Hughes de Montalembert, Eclipse: A Nightmare (Vermont: Viking Penguin, 1985) 95.

long and installed along a passageway it mirrors the movement of the viewer walking past. It generates a slow motion filmic effect as three shuddering frames reveal the form of a person moving past. I wanted the imagery to engage the viewer more directly and working at this larger scale moved towards this, although it would probably have been more effective if it was even larger, reaching from the floor to over head height.

Figure 38.
Iona Johnson, *Flickering* (2007)
Lino etching, 800 x 1200 mm (detail), entire work 800 x 3600 mm

The imagery for this work was partly generated through photography of the bush. I found that this was a useful means of recording what I was seeing. Attempts to draw in the dark were often frustrating battles with the wind and rain and paper and discomfort. My tendency to draw with precision rather than gesture confronted me with unsolvable difficulties in the face of the unrecognisable and indistinguishable forms of the night. So I took photographs using a digital SLR that enabled me to play with recording settings and became the means for discovering how my experience differed from the 'factual' records of the camera. I gradually understood that the camera did not really record what I saw or what I experienced. The colours that appeared in the photos were not actually visible to me in the dark. I realised that I was walking in the dark knowing that what I look at has colour but not really noticing that I was only seeing greys. Here, then, was a reminder that seeing happens in the brain. Despite this, I often had a sense that I was walking amongst a deep green in the gullies of ferns and trees.

I began looking for ways to experiment with the camera to record images that caught more of my experience rather than simply recording visual versions of my surroundings. Using the camera on a tripod recorded more light in an image than I actually saw in the dark but this did capture a sense of the stillness and the eerie quiet of the night that I experienced. I experimented with allowing the camera to swing randomly to photograph objects that sit in my peripheral vision. The images lurch at angles across the frame and lack a sense of being grounded, again capturing something I experienced when walking (Figure 39). Another way of exploring how to make the photographic process capture more of what I experienced was to approximate focus and framing and stand as still as possible while the camera took an exposure. These photos provide blurry results that record not only what is out there, the light and shapes, but also my movements – they feel as if they come closer to my experience of allowing the night and the bush to touch me. The photographs are images that I only use for journaling, but they record some of my experiments in learning about nocturnal perception. However, while the camera became a useful tool for learning about perception, it did not really capture rich and multi-layered experiences of the night.

Figure 39.
Iona Johnson, *Journal photos* (2008)
Digital photos, 2496 x 1664 pixels each

While these experiments in photography enabled me to develop and explore perceptual processes in the dark, I also needed to find ways to generate imagery that I could use in print. So I began generating marks with my body, exploring ways to make marks, focussing on touch - how I touch and am touched in my engagement with the environment. I made rubbings and began

playing with washes, leaving plants pressed in them to dry. I set myself the task of making imagery without looking, made through touch, through the bodily. I inked up plants and rolled them through the press, dusting the imagery with graphite powder, which captured something of the silvery quality of light, which operates in the moonlight. *Moon Shadow* (2008) was the culmination of these kinds of experiments. This image combines my shadow form with flickering foliage and is interrupted by gaps, echoing the way that tree trunks fragment images (Figure 40). The idea emerged from a moment when I was out walking and turned to see what I most dreaded, a figure behind me – it was however, only my shadow.

Figure 40.
Iona Johnson, *Moon Shadow* (2008)
Ink, washes, graphite, 800 x 1300 mm

I felt that I needed to develop more strategies and possibilities for generating print-based work. I had collected a series of rubbings from rocks and rough tree trunks and experimented with ways to convert these to printing blocks and plates. While rubbings could be transferred onto relief cut blocks, I found that I could generate some textural effects on plates using white ground washes. I explored ways of generating texture on steel plates as a way of evoking the tactile. The next set of works (2008) also used shadow forms, the shape indicating the absence of the object and of light. I collected rock shadow shapes and printed on top of washes using plates that I had created textured imagery on. With these works I began using colours that I associated with the night – dark blue and the bright greens and silvers of lichen (Figure 41). The prints however, felt too contained and complete, not allowing pathways for engagement with the viewer. So I cut them up and assembled

them en masse– this shifted them from being images that one could look at to fragments that one experienced (Figure 42).

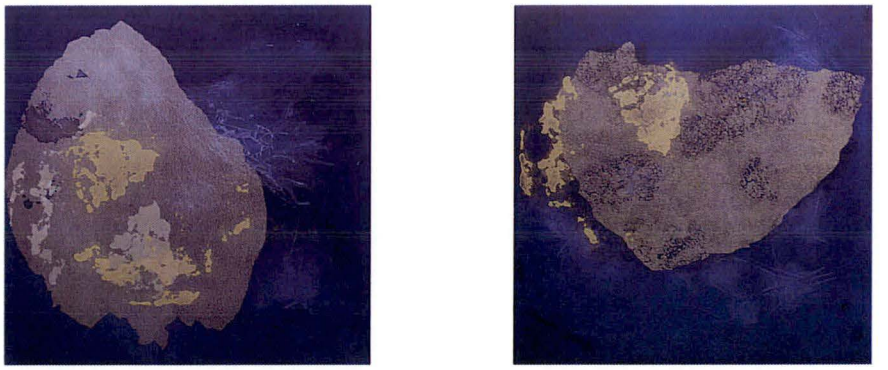

Figure 41.
Iona Johnson, *The Sense of Rock I & II* (2008)
Etching and washes, 400 x 400 mm each

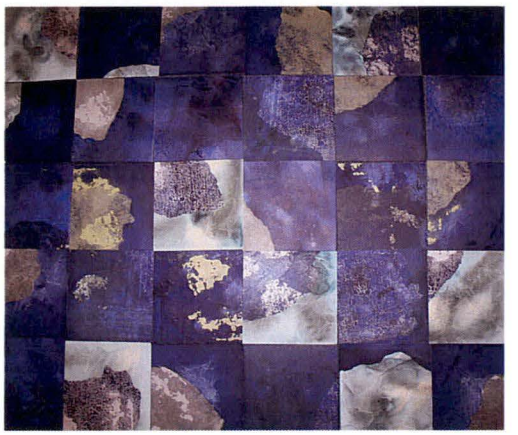

Figure 42.
Iona Johnson, *The Sense of Things* (2008)
Etching and washes, 200 x 200 mm squares

At this point in the project I felt I had sorted out many of the 'how' questions for the print aspect of the project – I had found ways to make blocks and plates that addressed the tactile and was working with the fragment as a strategy for engaging an intimate reading rather than a subject/object view from a distance. I had also learnt about aspects of nocturnal perception that informed my choices about use of colour, light/dark and the ways I projected self in the dark.

Phase Two: The Gestural Print

The discovery of working with white ground washes facilitated directly capturing impressions of objects on etching plates (Figure 43). These large plates successfully generated not representations or real forms but impressions left by forms in the evidence of interaction between the form and the wash. They become traces of experience and interaction and point to the co-existence of both an object and of myself. I made a series of these large plates which fuse a moment of encounter with objects like branches, rocks, moss, grass and fungi using white ground wash, suggesting sensate engagement with objects in the dark – a process of creating images without using light derived processes, just derived from touch.

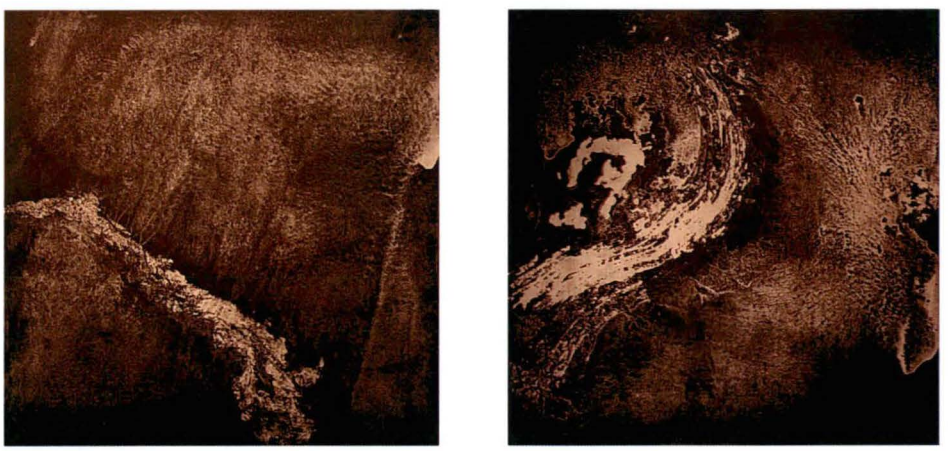

Figure 43.
Iona Johnson, *Nightscape I & II* (2009)
White ground wash etching, 800 x 800 mm each

These fusions created textures that suggested form and movement. Initially I printed these using coloured blacks, which are richer and have more depth than straight black. I also developed several plates with white ground in which I physically created impressions of my body, either static imprints or sliding movement (Figure 44).

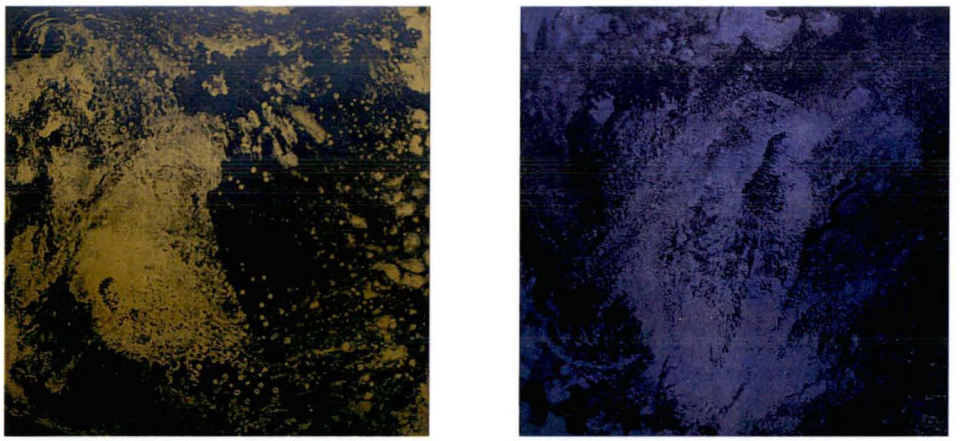

Figure 44.
Iona Johnson, *Sensate I & II* (2009)
White ground wash Etching, 600 x 600 mm each

Although these prints finally satisfied me in terms of the marks in relation to sensate experience, they did not convey enough in terms of the nocturnal or more perceptual aspects of darkness. This led to experimentation with different ways of printing these plates. I used these plates as the basis for most of the works developed subsequently.

After Image (2008)

These two prints explore the effect of an instance of intense vision. As I roamed the bush I noticed that when taking photographs a retinal after-image occurred when I had used the flash (Figure 45).

Figure 45.
Iona Johnson, *After Image I* (2009)
Etching, 800 x 1600 mm

This suggested a way to print these images so that the positive form becomes the negative in the second image and is also visually relocated, just as the interior experience of the after image is located in the mind rather than 'out there' (Figure 46).

Figure 46.
Iona Johnson, *After Image II* (2009)
Etching, 800 x 1600 mm each

Agnosia (2009)

(from Greek agnōsia 'ignorance')

I continued exploring further variations in printing these large plates. I began printing small 20 x 20 cm prints from the plates and these then became fragments to put together in new ways, building compound images from variations, echoing the process of flights of the imagination in the dark, the un-mooring from reality (Figure 47).

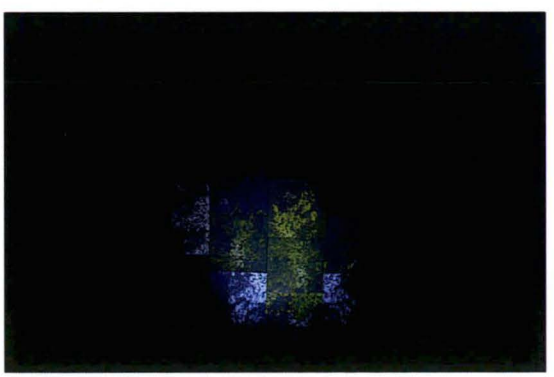

Figure 47.
Iona Johnson, *Apprehension* (2010)
Etching, 200 x 200 mm squares

The main work shown in Inflight, *Agnosia,* appears as a cluster of undulating, fragmented blue forms (Figure 48). The blues shimmer and shift subtly in strength of tone and shade. These are interrupted by areas of darkness and several distinct but unrecognisable forms. The work is comprised of multiple small square prints that are loosely tiled in a cluster on a dark wall. The prints sit closely together at the centre and disperse towards the edges. The central area is dimly lit and the lighting also disperses as the work moves out into the darkness. The fragmented forms suggest the billowing movement of air or perhaps sections of landscape. Feedback from several people concerning this work was that the blue images suggested glacial forms which has immediate associations for me of time slowed down. The slowing down of experience to the point that it can be noticed in more nuanced detail links with the strategy of heightening the visual for haptic effect.

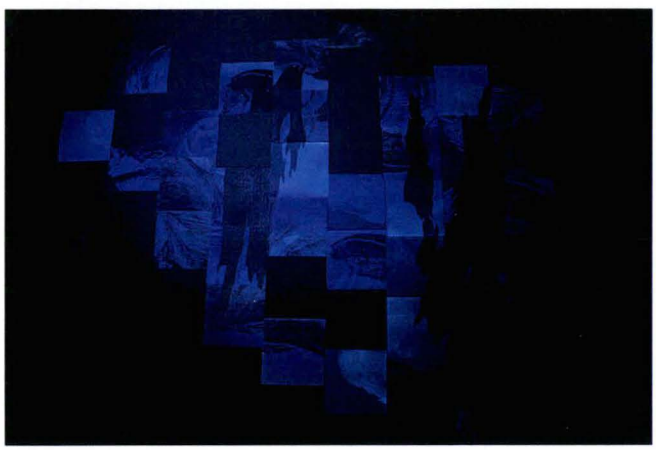

Figure 48.
Iona Johnson, *Agnosia* (2009)
Etching, 200 x 200 mm each square

I intended the variations in the blue to create a sense of the way something seems to change as you move past; new angles of sight and the build up of impressions creates shifting impressions. I had been concerned to avoid more obvious or stereotyped renditions of the night and was thinking about how we actually have a wide range of complex experiences of darkness. At around this time I read about Yves Klein's monochromatic blue paintings, which invite a kind of sensitivity to nuanced sensation. I also think of this as another version of Goethe's optical observations, in which colours appear to change the longer a viewer looks and the eye becomes fatigued.

The intent of this piece was to work with the idea of conveying the body moving past dark forms - a kind of fusion of self and night. The printed imagery is from larger plates made by sliding my body through white ground on steel plates which were then etched. The image then captures body movement and evokes the wild blowing wind that I experienced some nights. The passage through darkness is disrupted and disorienting. The elements and the bodily in this work combine to evoke an inner sense of the nocturnal.

As I was making this piece I was reading about how the eye physically operates in darkness and looking at diagrams of how different colours become more or less visible in darkness. Blue becomes more luminous while red becomes darker.[4] This explains why blue is associated with darkness more than other colours. Also, the lower the light levels the harder it is to see detail. When I set up the work at Inflight gallery I was exploring how to exploit the dark-light adaption. This is the way that our eyes adjust to low light conditions – initially one may not see much but after a couple of minutes will begin to see much more. The installation of this work was also an opportunity to work through some lighting issues. I learnt about the colour temperature of lighting and that cool light enhanced the cool blue colours of the work while warmer lighting worked against it.

During the course of the show I decided to cut out and raise some of the printed shapes, shifting the emphasis from an encounter with prints to a sense of encounter with forms. This became a strategy for reinforcing haptic and spatial effects. This work stands at the threshold between my two-dimensional print works and the subsequent three-dimensional print installations. The work brought together ideas that I had been exploring in the initial stages of the project and was the first piece designed specifically to operate in darkness. The space in which the works were installed became as important as the works themselves. This opened up the direction for the final body of work formally – moving toward completing works that utilised cut out forms of the

[4] Margaret Livingstone, Vision and Art: The Biology of Seeing (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc., 2002) 42-3.

fragments of imagery that I had generated. I planned a labyrinthine gallery set-up, which led to a trajectory for creating assemblages of cut out print fragments installed to generate an experience of darkness with objects that could not be quite grasped.

This second phase of the project also entailed working out the conceptual aspects of the project. I noticed that I was actively selecting particular images to photograph– there were particular qualities that I sought and these included creating a sense of wild nature and of the beautiful while totally blotting out any intrusions on my awareness of evidence of the presence of humans in the bush. What I was choosing not to photograph was as revealing as what I did. There are plenty of examples of human presence in the bush where I walk in the foothills of Mt. Wellington, where the urban meets the bush, but I was choosing not to photograph them – power poles, the lights of the city, tracks, weeds and rubbish. As soon as I realized this, I saw that I had constructed an idealised notion of bush and of a particular experience of the bush. This was a pivotal moment as the ground dropped from under my feet. I saw that I could construct work that dealt with the urban/bush interface by juxtaposing the urban with fragments of bush, but that wasn't what I had been talking about. I clarified then what my project is **not** about - the beautiful, the wilderness, the sublime, the surreal or a simplified version of nature verses culture. I felt unsure for a while then what I 'should' be looking for, as I realized that whatever I collected and transcribed would be my own fabrication. I had a sense of groundlessness and slippage – of ideas pulling apart and dissolving into more questions.

An underlying concern throughout was to find ways to link the idea of darkness and the night with contemporary concerns – I had avoided the obvious universal symbolism of aspects of the night – the moon, stars and silhouettes - and needed to find ways to embed allusions to the contemporary in the work. How does my experience of the night reflect the contemporary sensorium? The idea that night triggered an archetypal fearful response seemed a well-worn trope that said nothing about the contemporary experience of night. I took my interest in the sensory as symptomatic of a

yearning for the sensory in our culture. Reading supported this concept. I also had noticed how I wanted to find the beautiful in the night and ignored evidence of the man-made. So this was also evidence of seeking something untouched and pristine in nature. It added up to a longing for a return to the wild state, to nature. But how did the night figure in this? How did the night operate metaphorically? On one level it could operate as a metaphor for anxiety and uncertainty about the loss of the natural environment.

My ideas at this point came together around the realisation that the night is fundamentally different now to the night in prior times because of the technology that we engage with – the zone of the brightly lit city is what I leave behind when I enter the bush. But I take my mobile phone, my camera and torch with me. I do not experience primal fear of the dark as I am not really under threat. Technology and digital possibilities have fundamentally changed how we experience the world, including the night. We are leaving behind the physical world and entering a virtual world of flickering television and computer screens. We are leaving behind the environment in the wake of technological development. The darkness then stands for the contemporary unconscious and our dimming awareness of the physical world. This is a time of transition in the contemporary sensorium.

At this stage I conducted several investigations into electrical circuitry, which linked to ideas about the city and technology. I wondered if this kind of visual imagery could speak about the electrically enabling technology that we access. Our fundamental experience of the world has been altered as we engage with electronic networks of people, information, ideas and technological possibilities.

I spent some time generating imagery that suggests the technological – centering on electricity as emblematic of this. I made plates that played with the magnetism created by electrical currents and iron filings. Also I took photos of sparks from a Van de Graaf generator (Figure 49). There is a connection between the neural circuitry of our brains and the pathways of visual information via optic nerves/electrical impulses and the fact that

technology runs on electricity. I decided that this simplified binary of nature vs. technology was not useful to pursue and instead found ways to incorporate ideas about the neural component of perception in some of the works.

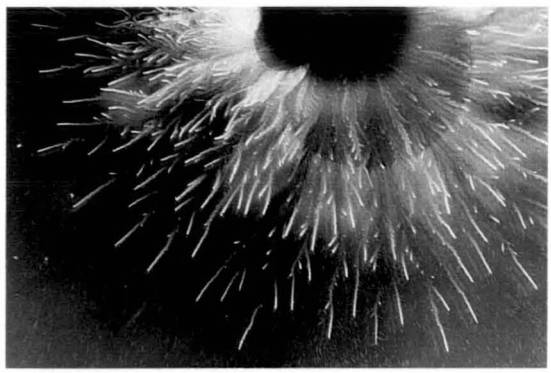

Figure 49.
Iona Johnson, Journal documentation, *Van de Graaf sparks* (2009)
Graphite, static electricity

Phase Three: The Labyrinthine Body of Work

These final six works are now discussed not in the order of making but in the order in which a viewer will encounter them in the labyrinthine gallery set-up. Darkness reduces visual acuity, as the types of photoreceptors used in darkness, the rods, are less sensitive to colour and detail. Rods are also used in peripheral vision and for sensitive motion detection.[5] Dark adaption can take up to half an hour to occur and the sequence of works encountered has been set up to initially ease a viewer into an experience of darkness but then to disrupt this with spatial, aural and haptic strategies.
The titles suggest bodily disturbances related to disordered perceptual behaviour and thus draw attention to perceptual questions.

Neuraesthesia (2010)

(neura – related to the neurons, aesthesia – the ability to feel)

As I explored what I was actually seeing in the dark, what was most evident was the loss of colour vision. Areas of brighter light stand out, defining fragments of form. I did a couple of large drawings using graphite, which

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[5] Rod Nave, Hyperphysics: Light and Vision, 2010, Available: http://hyperphysics.phy-astr.gsu.edu/hbase/vision/rodcone.html2011. Cited 4-1-10

shimmers like moonlight, defining light patches only. It is a strategy that begins to break down the visual. The form of the dark trees emerges in the darkness. The space between the light patches becomes as important as the drawn light – the negative space is that of the object. This continued the exploration of fragmentation further – the light reflected from the tree conveyed just enough to sense the form, asking the viewer to fill in the gaps and to sense it as much as see it (Figure 50).

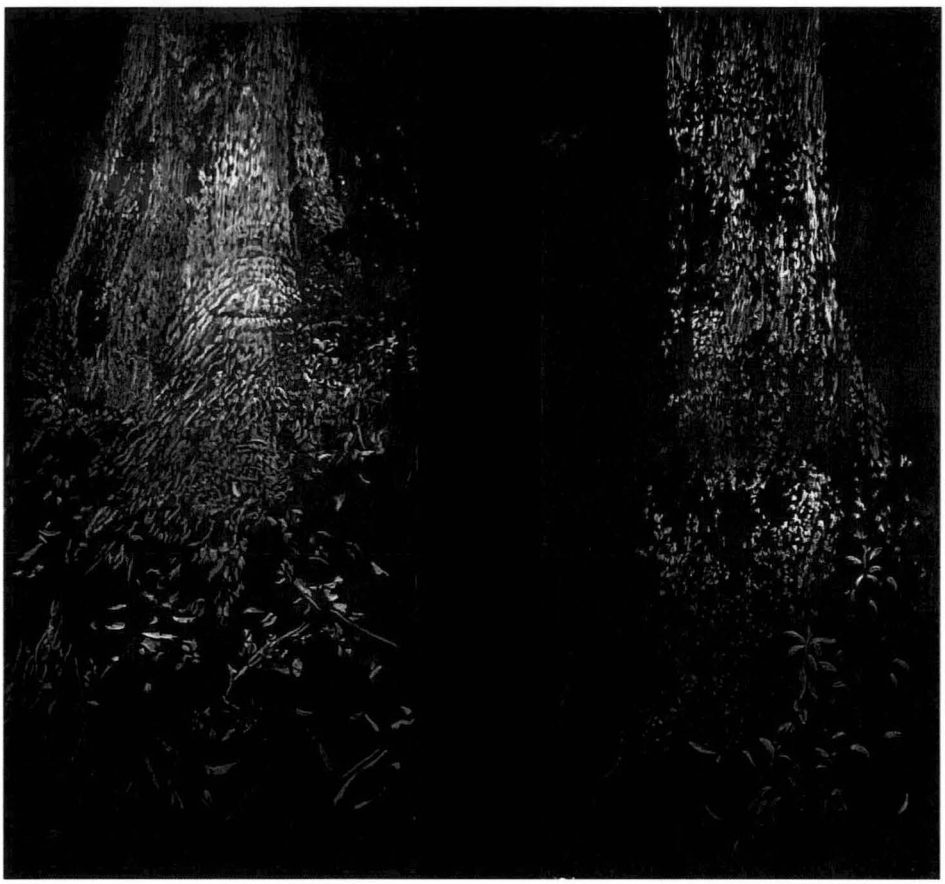

Figure 50.
Iona Johnson, *The Space Between* (2008)
Graphite drawings, 2 x 1m each

With these drawings I also considered how I might activate the space in which they were hung. The passage from the urban into the bush is a significant one, signifying entrance into a primordial psychological state. Peter Timms talks about the difference between the bush and the city: the "productive man-made environment (is) equated with enlightenment and order while the forest

denotes darkness and chaos" [6] I imagined these drawings being the first work that a viewer may encounter in the series of works that I present. I planned to hang them so that they sway as people move past. On the entrance side is the tree drawing just described while on the other side, is the opposite, light shapes around the tree trunk, so that the trunk is entirely a dark silhouette (Figure 51). This parallels the experience of entering and exiting the bush – when entering the bush track from the street the lights illuminate the tree trunk whereas when exiting back to the street the tree silhouettes appear dark and the urban light is visible around the trunks.

Figure 51.
Iona Johnson, *The Space Between* (2009)
Graphite drawing (detail)

Instead of completing these drawings I found anther way to develop this work, which brought in other aspects of my project. It evolved into cut out aluminium forms of the negative space between trees, made using a CNC router. The aluminium shapes define negative space, so that the silhouettes of dark branch forms are defined and merge with the dark space that the viewer is immersed in (Figure 52). The work invites the viewer to occupy in imagination a space in the bush, between the trees. The idea that the bush is disappearing is embedded in this. The movement of the viewer is suggested in reflected light on the aluminium.

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[6] Peter Timms, Making Nature: Six Walks in the Bush (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2001) 52.

Figure 52.
Iona Johnson, *Neuraesthesia I* (2010)
Cut aluminium, graphite, 3m x 4m

This work has two components and is installed on opposing walls at the beginning of the installation in a dark space that signifies passage into the forest and into darkness, which are associated with inner journeys. The works play with the edges of peripheral vision. A viewer can only see some of the work clearly, while other shiny parts can only be seen in peripheral vision. The flat surface of the aluminium gives way to printed surfaces where the visual begins to disintegrate (Figure 53).

Figure 53.
Iona Johnson, *Neuraesthesia II* (2010)
Cut aluminium, graphite. 3 x 4 m

Some of the aluminium pieces are printed with networks of roots, which suggest neural networks. This imagery points to the neural component of perception, the flickering of neurons piecing together the fragments. Graphite conducts electricity, reinforcing the operation of the neural. In order to strengthen the concept of the perceptual the graphite is printed directly onto the walls in the shapes of the aluminium as the image disperses out, so the image literally disintegrates at the edges. [7]

This work contrasts with the traditional form of the nocturne in which idyllic imagery of the bush, often silhouetted trees, is viewed safely from a distance. Sydney Long and many other artists have depicted darkness in romanticised terms – mystical or pastoral themes are evident in the nocturne.

In my work the silhouettes of trees are seen not from a distance, instead the viewer is brought close up, among the trees so that only incomplete parts are

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[7] Aluminium is also a particularly energy intensive product to produce and is manufactured using large amounts of electricity. Loretta Hall, How Products Are Made - Aluminium, Volume 5, Available: http://www.madehow.com/Volume-5/Aluminum.html, 24 Jan 2011. Cited 3-6-10

seen. The image can never be seen in entirety as it is too dispersed along the walls, but a viewer will gradually realise that they have become immersed in the darkness of the bush. Yi-Fu Tuan talks about how in dense forests horizons do not exist and so distanced viewing is not possible. "Space to a forest dweller is a dense net of places..." [8] Space is experienced differently in the forest and even more differently in the dark forest.

Anopia (2010)

(want or defect of sight; blindness, a large loss of vision in the visual field)

On one of the large steel wash plates I used fungi to generate marks. Fungi are connected with darkness as they need no light to grow and prefer cool damp bushland to grow in. Some fungi are luminescent in the dark and under UV light many fluoresce. They came to my attention in the dark as I played with a UV torch. I used this fungi plate to base this work on. I noticed a visual similarity between the gills of fungi, which have an ocular form, and the fibres of the iris of the eye. I transferred the fungi imagery to silk screens and printed sections of these in shimmering ink on black cut out acrylic forms. The shapes of the acrylic were derived from some earlier body prints I had done on paper. In installation these shapes are assembled in clusters of two or more, and are mounted on the wall in a large loose ellipse, an allusion to the rings that some fungi grow in (Figure 54).

[8] Yi_Fu Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977) 119.

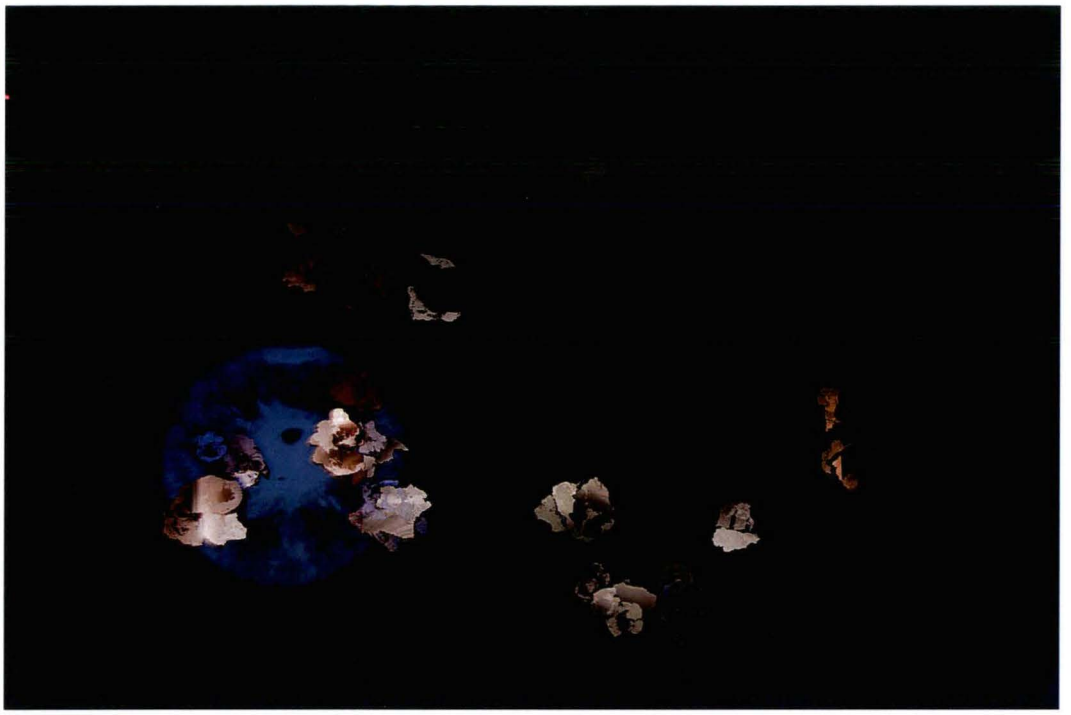

Figure 54.
Iona Johnson, *Anopia* (2011)
Screenprinted acrylic and projection, 3 x 4 m

I wanted the piece to draw attention to the visual process in a reflexive loop so that the viewer becomes aware of themselves seeing. The piece moved through several stages of experimentation. Initially I tried to set up shadows moving behind the cut out shapes, which are set out at different distances from the wall. I experimented with lenses, reflections, projection and small electric motors and what finally emerged was a looped projection of my eyeball, rendered as a gleaming white globe that slowly traverses the wall in an elliptical orbit, mimicking the rotation of the moon, as well as the movement of the eye. I found that it works best projected backwards onto an oval of black perspex so that the reflection onto the work is not only larger but also more ethereal and silvery, like the reflected light of the moon.[9] This projection is cast over the clustered prints; a slowly moving eyeball, that moves in an

[9] I later discovered the Claude Glass, an optical device used by eighteenth century artists. It is a small dark mirror that was used to reflect the landscape's tonal qualities which an artist would then paint with clearer ideas of light and shade and would often also exploit these to heighten picturesque effects. Arnaud Maillet, *The Claude Glass: Use and Meaning of the Black Mirror in Western Art*, trans. Jeff Fort (New York: Zone Books, 2004).

ellipse, lighting only the shapes that it moves over, while the rest are in darkness. The flat acrylic surfaces, which have closer associations with the cyclopean mode of vision, are interrupted as the cut out forms move into three-dimensional space.

This piece is then concerned with the visible and the invisible. On one level it is quite literally the visual process of the eye jumping in saccades to find edges and read images. The work also suggests hallucinogenic vision as the roaming, spinning eyeball suggests searching and loss of control and reason. It references Redon's eyeballs in the sky. It is about feeling watched in the dark – I was most afraid of other people watching me without my seeing them while being unaware of the other's intent. This work then plays with what we do not see, what we imagine out there in the dark. The projection of my eyeball is magnified and inverted so that the dark is light and the small spot of reflected white light often noticed in the eye is similarly inverted – it is dark and so suggests the blind spot at the back of the eye, the place where the optic nerve leaves the eye. The work is also about what we see and fail to see of nature. The eyes are in fact a kind of extension of the brain, both connected by and comprised of neural functioning.

Merleau-Ponty wrote about the reversibility of seeing; the body seeing becomes the body looked at, the body touching becomes the body touched.[10] At times the illusion of separation from the world dissolves. David Abram also writes about the reciprocity of our relationship with the world: "...such is the reversibility of the flesh, that we may suddenly feel that the trees are looking at us – we feel ourselves exposed, watched, observed from all sides."[11] One night I took a photograph with a flash thinking I would record a wallaby nearby but when I looked at the screen I found six pairs of red eyes in a field of

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[10] Galen Johnson, "Ontology and Painting: Eye and Mind," The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader: Philosophy and Painting, ed. Galen Johnson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1998) 47.
[11] David Abram, The Spell of the Sensuous (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1996) 68.

blackness. I suddenly felt that I was being watched in ways that I was unaware of.

The aim of this piece is to make the viewer more aware of their process of seeing, a kind of reflexive loop is set up, exploring the sense of sight.

***Synaesthesia* (2010)**

(from the Ancient Greek syn, "together," and aisthēsis, "sensation")

This work was inspired by the experience of walking down into the narrow watery gullies in the mountain foothills, where sound and space close in around me and everything seems more intimate, in contrast with the sense of open space that I experienced on the higher ridges. This narrow corridor creates a constricted space to walk through. The walls are covered in printed felt, which noticeably muffles sound (Figure 55). This work is then experienced aurally and physically as much as visually. Space closes down and becomes very close, sound is muffled and also seems close. There is a sense of being enclosed in greenness and the green colour of the walls undulates with darker and lighter areas. I was drawn to touch moss in the green gullies of the bush because it seems so soft but I found that in fact it is a city for insects, the home for many spiders and bugs. The work generates contradictory physical sensations. The softness and comfort of felt fabric seems to invite touch but the space closes in around a viewer, creating a sense of constriction, which is amplified by the muffling of sound. Awareness of self and disorientation become paramount. As the viewer's eyes adjust they may be able to read the organic imagery printed on the felt, creating a sense of being in an organic environment.

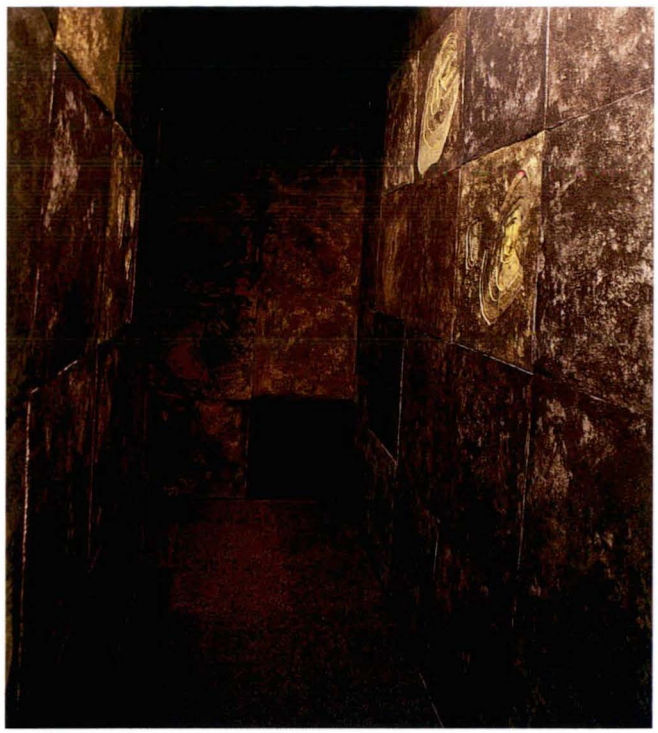

Figure 55.
Iona Johnson, *Synaesthesia* (2011)
Etchings printed on felt, dimensions variable

Several lighter areas of the walls have shallow cavities receding into them. These receding prints drop back into the wall like the contours of a map and define a shape like that of the ridges in the ear. In the dark sounds are clear and can be quite specifically located, providing useful clues for navigating. The forms suggest sound waves emanating from certain areas. The contour layers repeatedly print the same image and the colour becomes lighter as they recede. The printed imagery on these is drawn from plates with body movement rushing across them (the plates used for *Agnosia*). The movement of air, and again the fusion of body/environment are suggested.

The construction of this piece involves two laminated layers of felt. The top layer is of thin cotton felt which is dyed and printed with the organic wash plate. These are laminated onto thicker felt tiles, which absorb sound. These 60 x 60 cm tiles are pinned together almost seamlessly. The aim of the piece is to foreground felt experience: aural and spatial awareness and a sense of discomfort when in close proximity to the organic world. The silence presses in on the viewer. This work relates to Beuy's *Plight* but operates differently as

I address environmental concerns and foreground the organic and the sensate.

Amaurosis (2010)

(from Greek meaning darkening, dark, or obscure)

Another series of experiments, which developed from variations on printing the large wash plates involved using phosphorescent powder and UV lights. Again I explored rendering fragments of the images but in a different way. I printed small parts of the large wash images on large pieces of dark paper, dusting on phosphorescence, which then glowed under UV light. These were designed to be installed at various heights in the gallery and to operate in the dark with UV lights that turn on and off with a timer, so that the intensity and visibility of these pieces shifts in cycles from highly visible to almost invisible as the pigments respond to the UV light and then slowly fade when the lights are off (Figure 56). I wondered about setting this up so that the different prints were alternately illuminated. These images play with the sense of brief encounter with strange textures in darkness and suggest both the way that tactile memories linger and slowly fade, and also the disappearing organic world.

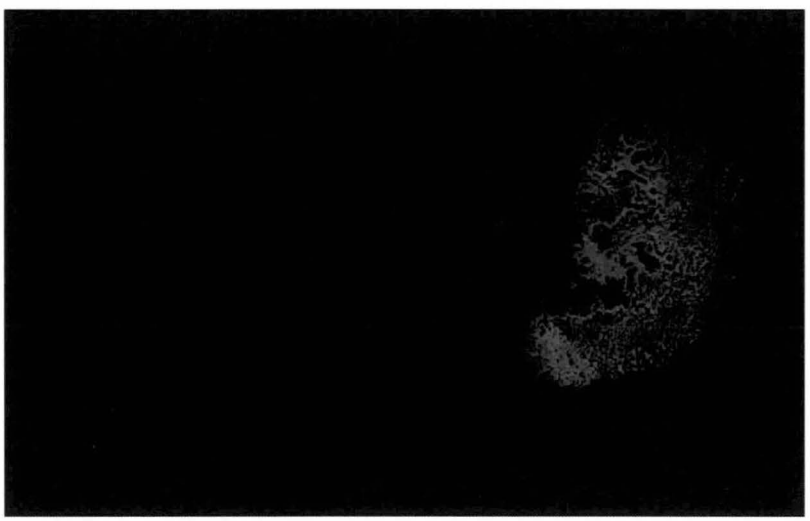

Figure 56.
Iona Johnson, phosphorescence test (detail),
Etching with phosphorescent powder, 80 x 80 cm full size print

Again, this work evolved further once I had developed more coherent ideas about what I aimed to say with the work. It was refined to explore how to draw attention to space and modes of vision. I printed fragments from one of the wash plates and cut these out in forms that were based on one of my photographs of an eroded creek bank with exposed tree roots. The image does not resemble this at all in this abstracted form, instead it suggests a map. This is not however, a real map, which poses an interesting questions for a viewer (Figure 57). What am I looking at here? Where is this place? The UV lights cycle on and off every few minutes so that this image becomes highly visible and then disappears – the organic world is disappearing and becoming unrecognisable.

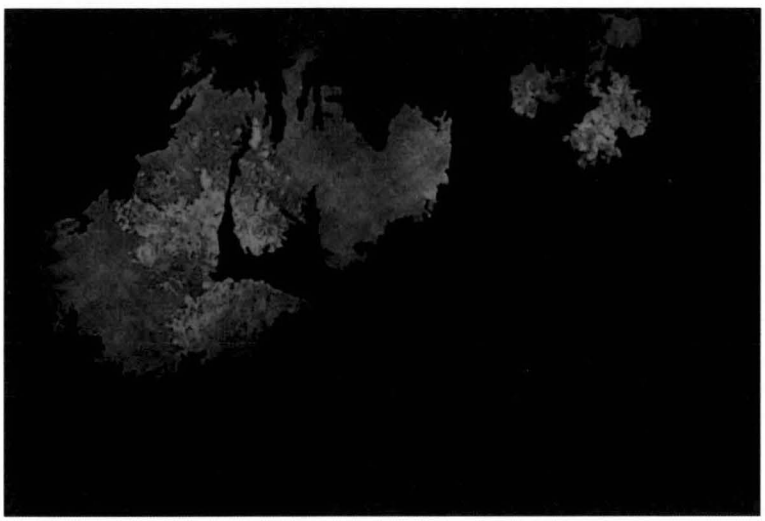

Figure 57.
Iona Johnson, Amaurosis (detail) (2010)
Cut out etching and acrylic

The prints are mounted behind cut out acrylic and when the UV lights are on a vast and expansive starscape is visible which overpowers the phosphorescent image. This starscape is actually an image of the world at night which is available on the web, showing how brightly lit the cities of the world are (Figure 58). The Eurocentric bias of our technologically enhanced vision is evident, as are geographic distortions of this panaoramic view of the world. The creation of the world map with dots echoes the pixelated digital vision with which we have become familiar. Distribution of wealth around the world is apparent; wealthier countries have access to electricity and Africa still seems to be the heart of darkness. It is then an image of light pollution, one of the

effects of human technology. Our relationship to space has changed dramatically over the last 100 years, from one where we imagined travelling to outer space, to one in which this is now possible and images of the earth from satellites are now very familiar.

Figure 58.
Iona Johnson, *Amaurosis* (2010)
Cut out etchings, acrylic, UV sensitive pigments, 3 x 4m

The movement from the constricted space of the felt corridor to this work draws attention to how spatial experience can alter viewing modes. Close up and detailed imagery invites more intimate and embodied viewing, while the panoptic gaze enables more distanced and disembodied optical surveillance. Embodied vision is contrasted with ocularcentric vision. The alternation between these two images generates a sense of expanded space, then more intimate space, as the organic phosphorescence is much smaller. When Bachelard writes about the forest he links it directly to an exploration and expansion of self, to the idea of immensity. To go deeper into the woods is to go into a limitless world, into an "inner immensity". This sense of being drawn into a limitless space is, he suggests, a primary and essential association of

the forest. The forest holds mystery, "hidden grandeur, depth".[12] The wonder evoked by infinite space is tainted by the recognition of global light pollution. In this work this sense of grandeur is reversed as the prints standing for the organic world are smaller in scale and invite a closer more intimate viewing, while the panoptic view of the world at night as seen from a satellite pushes a viewer back to view from a distance.

***Phrenesia* (2010)**
(From Latin phrenesis and Greek phrēn 'mind')

In contrast to the quiet and stillness of the darkness of the previous works, this room seems bright, flooding the eyes with light. The eyes can be blinded by too much light as well as too little. Through an excess of vision this work aims to create visual confusion and a visceral response. The shuddering sensation of multiple moths again elicits embodied vision. The UV lighting makes it difficult to judge the size of this space, which is designed to enclose a viewer. It is a large-scale print work and a frenzy of forms emerges from the hyper-white glow of bleached white paper in UV light. The swirling forms are of moths rendered on large scale and it is as if the viewer is enclosed in a giant lampshade joining the moths being drawn to the light. UV lights illuminate the work, referencing the particular attraction that moths have to UV light (Figure 59).

[12] Gaston Bachelard, The Poetics of Space (Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1994) 185-6.

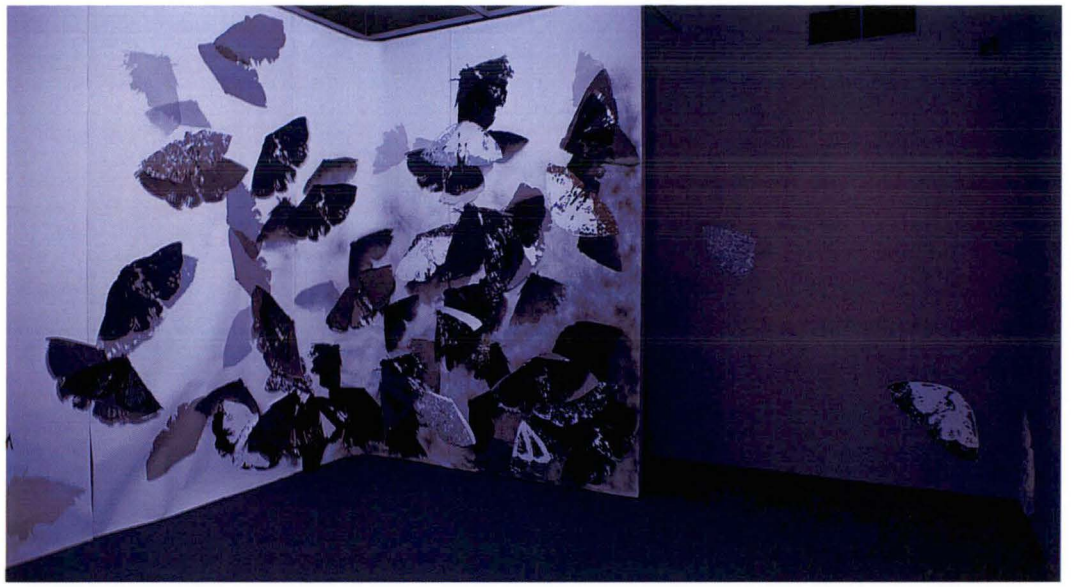

Figure 59.
Iona Johnson, Phrenesia (2011)
Screen print, (detail) dimensions variable

The UV light links with my research into vision. At the back of the eye there is a purple pigment which is vitamin B, and plays a pivotal part in the chemistry of vision.[13] UV light is an uncomfortable light to see in as it operates at the edge of the spectrum of vision. I conducted quite extensive experimentation on printing for UV lighting (Figure 60). UV lighting is also associated with night clubs - the night time realm of sensation and immersive experience. Barbara Bolt discusses the concept of the techno-sublime: she suggests that the rave, the dance party, is a space in which 'exstasis' can be experienced. This kind of experience is one where self dissolves into the pulse of bodies, music, heat and light. [14] This links with the kind of Dionysian frenzy observed in moths fluttering wildly around a light. This work embodies the frenzied moth swarms gathering around lights, suggesting a slippage between wonder and heightened anxiety.

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[13] Simon Ings, The Eye: A Natural History (London: Bloomsbury Publishing 2007) 58.
[14] Coleman Bolt, Jones and Woodward, "The Techno-Sublime," Sensorium: Aesthetics, Art, Life (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007) 45.

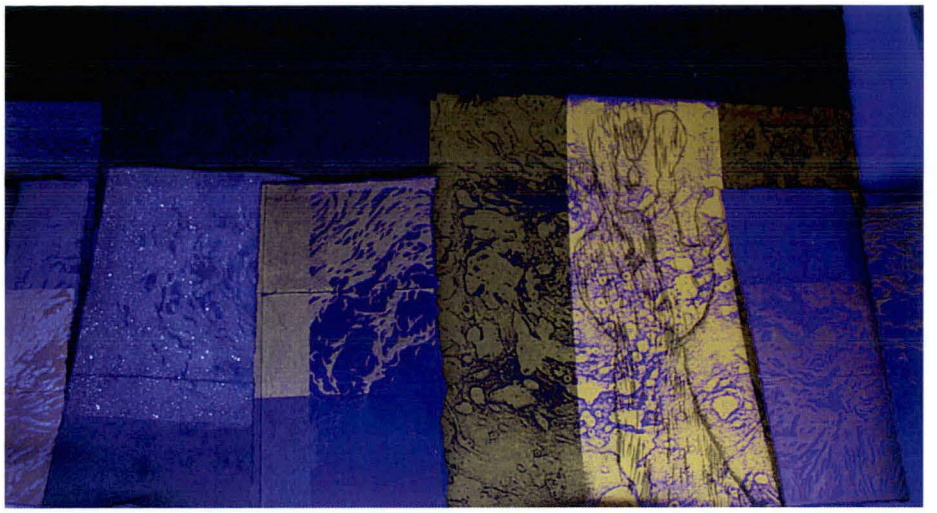

Figure 60.
Iona Johnson, UV light tests (2008)
Linocuts and lino etching, various inks, test prints approx. 100 x 200 mm each

There are several distinct areas in this work. Some clusters of moths are flocked to render the soft moth fur, evoking the tactile. The flocked patterns of these laser cut moths are made from a plate with marks made by a flurry of hand movements in white ground. The blind gestural mark making mimics the blind groping of outstretched hands in darkness. This mass of pattern denies form and thus vision, suggesting the bodily.

Another cluster of forms suspended out from the wall is a collection of moth fragments, printed with more silhouetted fragments of moth imagery. It is constructed to convey a sense of falling pieces – the result of moth frenzies, as moths die from heat and exhaustion around lights. Like moths, which see with compound eyes in fragments, this larger picture is built up from the fragments of imagery. These small moths which have lost their hyper-glow and are plummeting towards the ground.

The work is designed to operate as a reminder of how we are touched and to question how we are blind. This is the centre of the labyrinth, where an orgy of excessive vision moves into the realm of the bodily. The viewer is thrown into the world of the moth whose heady intoxication with light ends in exhausted death, highlighting one of the effects of light pollution on the environment.

Colours are reduced to a palette of whites, purples, shades of off-white and flocked areas that also read as areas of shade or hyper-white. Images are ghostly, as if just memories of the natural world. The viewer is immersed in technological space – the element of electricity that dominates the urban night. Dislocation from the environment is extreme. The links with Silveira's work here are evident. Insects evoke the tactile and this association is disturbing.

***Kinaesthesia* (2009)**

(from Greek kinein 'to move' + aisthēsis 'sensation')

This final work in the labyrinth, *Kinaesthesia*, consists of cut out prints mounted on mdf wood. The printed shapes seem to hover in darkness, with no apparent means of support. These shapes are at heights varying from almost floor level to shoulder level and they recede down a corridor ahead of the viewer (Figure 61). The usual cues for visual depth have been obscured, so it seems uncertain what size the space and distances are. The printed marks are highly textured and organic, suggestive of rocks. The colours are yellow/green and blue/purple and blacks with bright highlights thrown up by a jumping white. There is an occasional partial footprint. There is a central if irregular pathway between these forms and as the viewer steps into it the adjacent shapes start to move – the movement of each shape is a gentle swirling motion, as if moving on a stalk. The floor itself also feels as if it moves underfoot.

Figure 61.
Iona Johnson, *Kinaesthesia* (2010)
Etching, cut out and mounted on mdf and dowel, foam, carpet underlay, dimensions variable

The shapes are again taken from the shadows of rocks, a dark form that indicates both presence and absence and the prints are balanced on thin lengths of dowel. The printed inks glow in varying intensities under UV light and the floor is unstable, activating movement in these hovering prints as viewers move through them. The work is designed to suggest the difficulty of finding footholds in the darkness, the configuration inspired by the activity of rock hopping, which is not one that I have attempted in the dark but one that amplifies the sense of uncertainty associated with finding safe footing in the dark. Yellow and black in the natural environment signify danger and so these colours in the work are suggestive of the hazardous way that we tread on the earth. I aimed with this work to generate awareness in the viewers of their own process of sensing in the dark. This is the reflexive perceptual loop again.

Kinaesthesia went through several stages of evolution. Initially I printed imagery derived from plates I had made which held traces of electrical currents and I thought of the work suggesting the undercurrents of technology

that are embedded in our existence. The prints were also initially mounted on fixed stems of wood. However, the imagery simply read as texture – the association with electricity was not apparent. Moreover, I had printed these in yellows, purples and blacks, which did not convey enough of the organic world that I aimed to reference. I reprinted these with more organic imagery suggesting rock and changed the palette to include greens and a hyper-white, which jumped and hovered (Figure 62). I exploit the perceptual effects of colours again in this work, as the UV light foils our ability to sense depth and casts the prints in a light that is outside the everyday. Our eyes are unable to focus precisely on blues.[15]

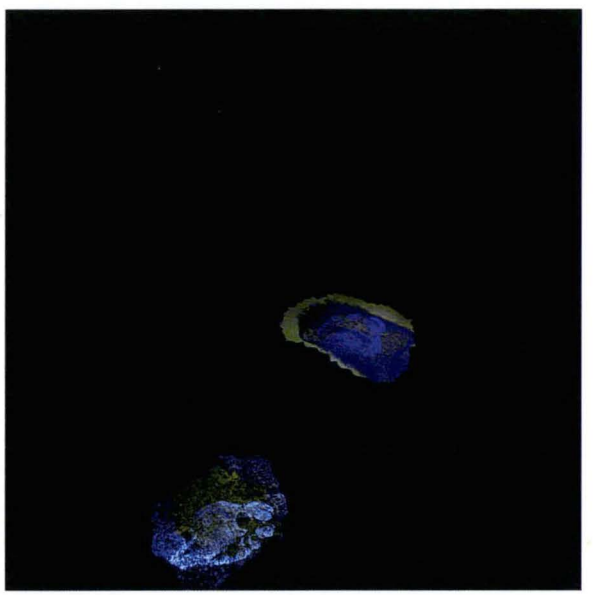

Figure 62.
Iona Johnson, *Kinaesthesia* (2010)
Etching, cut out and mounted on mdf and dowel (detail)

Andy Goldsworthy's *Moonlit Walk,* in contrast to this, is an installation directly in the environment that facilitates connection to and awareness of the environment. My work, while dealing with the environment, foregrounds instead a sense of slippage and dislocation from the natural world. While Merleau-Ponty argues for an intrinsic connection to the world, David Abram acknowledges that a sense of connection with the environment can only be generated by spending enough time there in order to re-sensitise ourselves to it. Both of these points relate to this work. In the immediacy of the experience of the work, a viewer may sense the dislocation. Metaphorically this work

[15] Nave, Hyperphysics: Light and Vision.

speaks of difficulty finding one's way, of slippage, and then about the anxiety generated by this sensation. It links with the idea of losing the ground under our feet as the natural world erodes and is degraded by our own heavy stamping feet. Our footprint on the planet seems devastating. This work suggests that we are out of balance with nature.

Tuan talks about being lost in a forest. Losing the path leads to feeling completely disoriented. Perception of space still exists all around but meaningful reference points have disappeared.[16] The final corridor in the labyrinth is just dark; there are no more reference points, there is only twilight space. A viewer's eyes may well have adapted to darkness by the time they have reached this final passage, so that darkness may no longer seem as threatening. This last passage invites reflection, a space in which to reconsider relationship to the natural environment before exiting the gallery. The viewer is invited to reclaim the role of creator/participant and thus affirm their agency in the world.

Conclusion

During this project I explored ways to bring together the experiential basis of the project with more conceptually driven concerns to articulate my experience of the nocturnal environment in a contemporary context. Strategies used include exploiting the possibilities for variation and repetition in print, building suggestions of larger wholes by using the fragment, activating the space to include the viewer in the artwork, varying lighting effects, using a range of materials to develop various sensory effects and foregrounding the haptic to subvert the optical. I found ways to allude to concepts beyond the immediate work itself with careful consideration of the shapes, configurations and imagery.

I looked at a range of phenomenal strategies used to engage viewers on a sensory level. The strategies that I have developed to subvert the optical and engage the embodied include: increasing the engagement of other senses –

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[16] Tuan, Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience 36.

considering space, placement, movement and sound; creating marks using the body rather than the eyes; allowing physical and chemical print processes to play a part in the image creation rather than my own visual directions; creating a mass of impressions that deny optical order, instead generating a sense of the visceral; and using repeated and fragmented imagery to heighten effect. The darkness suggests nocturnal perceptions and heightens awareness of other sensory modalities, thus pointing to the perceptual. Conversely the strategy of creating visual excess also leads to the visceral. The labyrinthine gallery requires peripatetic engagement over time and this establishes the idea of the inner journey, shifting emphasis to the viewer's own perceptual processes.

CONCLUSION

Evaluation of the project

This project is focused on conveying a sense of embodied visuality in darkness, which is explored via the medium of print in conjunction with installation strategies and concepts. The work is concerned with the phenomenal effects of darkness in the environment in relation to the contemporary sensorium. I have drawn on phenomenological ideas and methods and on my own nocturnal experiences to reflect on aspects of the contemporary night, creating a series of print-based installations that extend the possibilities for sensory effect.

I have used strategies that promote sensory engagement using the analogue print in order to provoke questions and awareness of the perceptual process itself. A central aim of the project was to find strategies for deploying the haptic to disrupt the optic. This investigation began with the two-dimensional print and extended into explorations of three-dimensional strategies, which better met the aims of the project. In terms of the possibilities of the two-dimensional print surface, I explored mark making in order to capture gestural bodily movement, which points to sensory apprehension. Other ways of enhancing the sensory included printing on varied substrates, which added haptic qualities to the work. For example, printing on felt increased the depth and tactility of the surface, while printing on black acrylic reduced depth to a reflective surface. One of the central strategies that I adopted was cutting out printed forms and assembling these in repeating configurations, which heightened the effect of the work and also added other layers of meaning. Three-dimensional print assemblages become haptic through spatial depth and are then apprehended over time as a viewer moves through or past the work. In Amaurosis different modes of viewing are juxtaposed within the work; the mastery of the distanced visual gaze is contrasted with intimate and haptic viewing presentations. The low light and UV light viewing conditions destabilise everyday ways of seeing and activate awareness of aural, spatial,

orientation cues. Experimentation has resulted in works that draw together diverse methods for combining prints in dark installation environments.

The resulting works are a series of print environments that convey a sense of estrangement and dislocation from the natural world. In this way the work comments on the uneasy situation in which we find ourselves in the world. The print fragments carry traces of interactions with the natural world, reminding the viewer of the aesthetic beauty of the organic world but also carrying reminders of its disappearance. The prints, which are physical and present evidence of tactile engagement with the world, evoke a sense of unfamiliarity in relation to the night environment. The works are designed to provoke uncertainty and provide cues for interpretation through engagement and contemplation over time. The unfamiliarity of multi-sensory perception in darkness disrupts perceptual habits. Quick visual and rational comprehension is foiled in the work, in favour of a more considered and embodied way of engaging with the work. I attempt to disrupt the cyclopean mode of vision with embodied vision, and posit perceptual questions that point towards the significance of perceptual experience.

The analogue print now has a particular place in the trajectory of technological reproduction. A certain nostalgia is attached to the analogue print and I draw on this to suggest that a yearning for the loss of the instinctive, the raw and sensate can be represented by the physical print, as an analogue index. In this work however, the embodied experience is uncomfortable and laden with a sense of dislocation from the physical world. There is no inherent comfort in the physical, but immersive and sensate experiences serve to both affirm and question our existence.

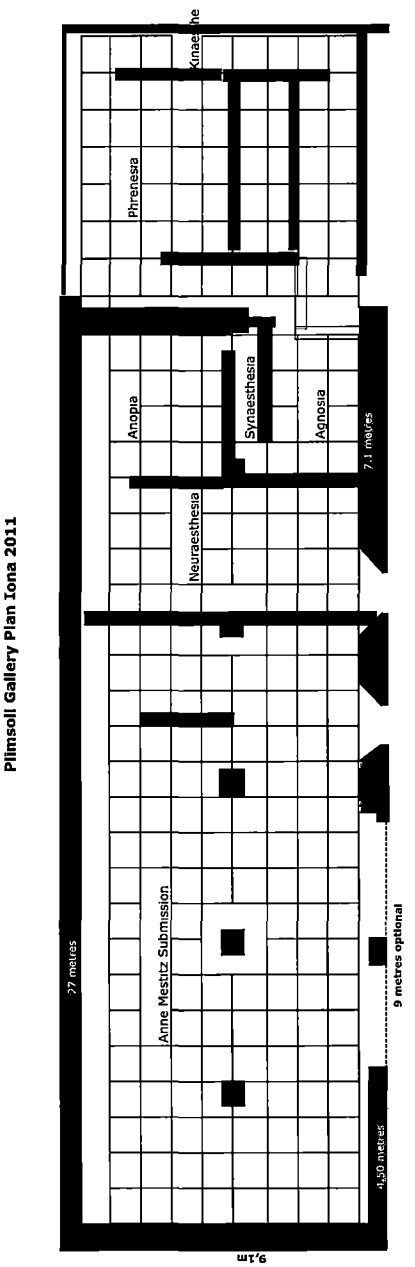
The aim of the installation is to create a perceptual intervention, a hiatus in the habitual – I ask a viewer to consider the anxieties hidden behind the everyday, to experience a break from processing the streams of sensory stimuli of everyday life to consider the rich possibilities of subjective experience in darkness. The project deals with modes of vision, positioning the embodied mode of being as one that subverts the dominant cyclopean

mode, which is associated with the digital and loss of engagement with the physical environment.

The final installation of the project is within a dark, labyrinthine gallery structure, which has associations with the inner journey, established through movement into an interior space. The work requires viewers to navigate a realm of visual disintegration, in which organic impressions hover on the edge of visibility. Everyday modes of seeing are destabilised through encounters with fragments of imagery that hover between form and feeling, imagination and reality. The senses are addressed by assembling printed forms in ways that draw attention to the space in which they are encountered and by exploiting the uncertainty and irrational associations that are characteristic of nocturnal experiences. The imagery suggests encounters with the nocturnal, organic world and draws attention to the perceptual process itself. This exploration of ideas and processes suggests a reading of the night which points to the richness of sensuous engagement with the world, encouraging the viewer to reconsider their own relationship to the world in darkness.

The works invite the viewer to consider ideas about visibility, embodiment, experience, perception and their relationship with the world, by appealing to the corporeal imagination to enact the process of perception. It is a strategy for re-sensitisation to our separation from and dependence on nature. The work reminds the viewer that an alternative mode of being exists, one in which embodied vision re-establishes agency and choice for the viewer and in which we remember that we are immersed in the world to the extent that our survival depends on it. This strategy suggests that there are ways to rethink our relationship with the environment and ourselves.

APPENDIX 1: Plimsoll Gallery Plan



APPENDIX 2: Titling of works

Some of these 'definitions' are taken from Webster's Online Dictionary while others are words that simply have recognisable etymological derivations but are put together to suggest particular behavioural dysfunctions.

Agnosia:

Inability to recognize objects by use of the senses.

From Greek *agnōsia* 'ignorance'

Anopia:
Want or defect of sight; blindness.

Amaurosis:
Partial or total loss of sight without pathology of the eye; caused by disease of optic nerve or retina or brain.
From Greek meaning *darkening*, *dark*, or *obscure*

Neuraesthesia:
Neural – relating to the neurons, aesthesia – the ability to feel

Synaesthesia:
A sensation that normally occurs in one sense modality occurs when another modality is stimulated
from the Ancient Greek syn, "together," and aisthēsis, "sensation"

Phrenesia:
from Latin *phrenesis*, from Greek *phrēn 'mind.'*
Origin of frenzy; a state or period of uncontrolled excitement or wild behavior

Kinaesthesia:
The perception of body position and movement and muscular tensions
from Greek *kinein 'to move'* + *aisthēsis 'sensation'*

List of figures:

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